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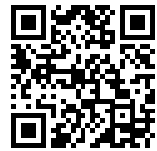

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AT HOME WITH GOD

PRUDENT PAPERS ON SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

MATTHEW RUSSELL, S.J.

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PRIEDIEU PAPERS ON SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS

BY THE LATE

REV. MATTHEW RUSSELL, S.J.

AUTHOR OF "MOMENTS BEFORE THE TABERNACLE," "IDYLS OF KILLOWEN," ETC.

NEW IMPRESSION

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
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THE first of the following papers explains their name and their nature as described in the subtitle of the book, "Priedieu Papers on Spiritual Subjects". It may be well to say here that the book is called also AT HOME WITH GOD, because it aims at helping its readers to feel *at home with God*, as children of a loving and merciful Father who yearns to make them happy with Himself in Heaven. On earth we live by faith, hope, and charity; but only in Heaven, our true Home, shall we be perfectly and securely at home with God for ever.

NOTE TO NEW IMPRESSION.

AN edition of two thousand copies having been exhausted in eight months, this book is sent forth anew, with sincere gratitude for the favour with which it has been received at home and in the United States.

19 *March*, 1911.

AND again, a third time, 19 March, 1912, God be praised.

M. R.

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ON PRIEDIEUS IN GENERAL AND THESE PRIEDIEU PAPERS IN PARTICULAR.

INSTEAD of a preface, let us begin with a few remarks on the name and nature of these little essays in easy spirituality—the name at least that is given to them in the sub-title of this book.

One whose judgment I hold in the highest esteem advised me to leave out the word *priedieu* in my title-page. "Most of your readers will not know what it means." Well, is it not desirable that they should know it? Would it not be well to make them know it? The word may help to introduce the thing which is not as common amongst us as it ought to be.

In one of the Countess Hahn Hahn's clever novels, the heroine has just arrived at the splendid house of certain relatives who are merely nominal Catholics, and she has been conducted to the room assigned to her use. "When Sylvia was alone, she took a prayer-book out of her bag and ran her eyes along the room and alcoves. However, she did not find what she sought, there were no signs of crucifix, religious picture, or holy water-stoup. She took out a small silver crucifix which her mother had always

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worn, put the tea-tray on one side of the dressing-table, and her prayer-book and crucifix on the other, and said to herself, quite pleased, 'This will do for a little altar'. Then she knelt down devoutly to say her night prayers."

Ida Hahn Hahn, being a convert, a lady, a German, and particularly sentimental, may here lay too much stress perhaps on the absence of all devotional appliances in Sylvia's bedroom, which she puts forward as an indication of the worldliness of the household into which her heroine had been introduced. However it may be in Vienna, the guests in many a pious Catholic home in Cork or Dublin might, we fear, look around equally in vain for priedieu or holy-water. But, without dwelling on the excuses that might readily be offered for such omissions, it will be more to our present purpose to urge the utility of these outward helps to piety, especially the one that gives a name to this series of papers.

First, however, as the word "priedieu" will occur pretty often, let us settle how we are to spell it; for this point is a little unsettled. For instance, a London firm, advertising their "suitable presents for First Communion" in "The Weekly Register" of 29 March, 1890, spoke of Pries Dieu in the plural, and in the singular they offered a small Prie-Dieu suitable for home use, enamelled white, 27s. 6d., or any colour to order—quite too high a price, one would think, for practical purposes. The clerk who drew up the advertisement deemed it his duty to

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display his knowledge of French, in which language *prier* means "to pray" and *Dieu* means "God"; and he wished to imitate the bad example of those who speak of "two handsfull of gooseberries". Whereas "handful" is the proper singular and "handfuls" the proper plural; and almost in the same way "priedieu" has a right to be recognized as a single English word, or as a compound with its component parts completely fused together. Therefore its plural is to be formed in the ordinary manner by tacking on *s* at the end, not slipping it in after *prie* in the middle, and certainly not by adding *x* to *Dieu*, as has been sometimes done. Furthermore, the word ought to be naturalized amongst us so far as to be pronounced without any attempt at the French sound of the triphthong, but just simply *preedew*, — like the mountain dew that "Rab and Allan cam' to pree".

The dictionaries give us little help in naturalizing this convenient French term for a *genuflexorium* or praying-stool. They omit it altogether, even Worcester's fine work. Webster alone[1] includes the word, defining it "a kind of desk at which to kneel for prayer" and spelling it properly with a small *d*, a minuscule, not a capital, but improperly inserting a hyphen, which certainly has no business there, though most people give it.

[1] The "English Dictionary on Historical Principles" has reached it and quotes as authorities Horace Walpole, Matthew Arnold, and Miss Braddon.

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We do not know where to look for the history of priedieus. The most ancient that we have heard of is the one on which Columbus prayed just before starting on his first voyage in search of a New World. It is carefully preserved at Huelva, and some years ago at the celebration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America the Queen Regent of Spain knelt for a long time in prayer upon that most venerable of priedieus.

A priedieu ought to be an item in the furniture of a bedroom. Those who have not a regular priedieu might follow the example of the German heroine who opened this discussion: they might place on a table a crucifix and a few pious books, with a holy picture on the wall above them; and it would be very well to place a cushion on the spot where we are supposed to kneel at our prayers. If our arrangements must be reduced to the utmost simplicity, it is better to kneel leaning on the back of our chair than to loll or sprawl over the seat thereof. At any rate in some form or other provision ought to be made for the proper saying of our prayers the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night.

So much for the name of these papers; what about their nature. The name of Priedieu Papers has been chosen, partly no doubt for the sake of "apt alliteration's artful aid," but chiefly because it expresses aptly enough the nature and object of the little series. They are "papers," not sermons or

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prayers and hardly essays; they are meant to be spiritual reading of a kind not always quite grave enough to be read before the altar, and even in your chamber you will read them (if at all) not kneeling at your priedieu but seated on a chair beside it.

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ON GOOD DESIRES.

Concupivi Desiderare.

The 118th Psalm is known to every one as the longest of all the Psalms. Psalm lxxvii. is the second longest, and even it is so long that its length forms the point, or rather the kernel, of a venerable ecclesiastical chestnut about an old priest who had made his studies in prosody-despising France, and who on a certain occasion imposed as a penance on a brother priest to say the Psalm *Attendite* once, laying the stress of his voice on the third syllable. The penitent rashly interposed with: "*Attendĭte*—it's short". "Oh, it's short, is it? Then you can say it twice." This Psalm, with its seventy-two verses, would be a very respectable penance when doubled; but even thus it would fall far short of Psalm cxviii. with its hundred and seventy-six verses.

This great psalm, *Beati immaculati in via*, which is great in other things besides its length, does duty (as we priests have a good right to know) for eleven separate Psalms in the daily Office of the Church, and is relieved with an additional tenfold supply of doxologies. Each of these eleven divisions is made

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up of two of the twenty-two portions into which the Psalm is broken up in the Bible, corresponding with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of these twenty-two portions consists of eight verses, and all the eight begin with the same letter, according to the order of the alphabet. Fourth of the third batch, the Gimel eight, the Camel division, comes the twentieth verse of the psalm, in which the Royal Prophet says to God: "My soul hath coveted to long for Thy justifications at all times". *Concupivit anima mea desiderare justificationes tuas omni tempore.* This divinely inspired Psalmist, this consummate master of spiritual language, whose words have given and will give expression to the praise, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, fears, hopes, and longings of so many of the purest and highest hearts through all the thousands of years that the world has since lasted and may yet last—he thinks it worth while to say to his Lord and his God that he has always longed to desire His justifications. He does not even dare to claim for himself the merit of having always desired to *fulfil* God's law, but only of having desired to desire it.

The desire of a desire! As we speak of the delusive pleasures of this sinful and fleeting world as being false as the dream of a dream, meaning this to denote the very extreme of deceitfulness, the maximum of unreality, so the minimum of earnestness in our good desires, the least possible amount of determination in a holy purpose, might seem to

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be conveyed by the phrase, "the desire of a desire". Yet it is this that the penitent king puts forward as one of his claims on the mercy and bounty of his Creator, that at all times, in his very worst time, he had at least always coveted to desire the justifications of God.

After having repeated this sacred text some eleven thousand times (some thousands more since I performed the little sum in simple multiplication which gave me that result), after having repeated it so often with this special force and signification, and certainly with more frequent advertence to its meaning than in the case of any other word of the Divine Office—for I remember distinctly emphasizing it in the first weeks of subdeaconship—I was shocked to find one of the latest authorities, Father Schouppe, S.J., in his "Explanatio Psalmorum," rudely, without one word of apology, upsetting this traditional interpretation by giving as his paraphrase of the text, *Ardenti desiderio concupivit anima mea tuas justificationes*: "My soul has coveted Thy justifications with an ardent desire," as if this were a Hebraism for a strong and perfect desire, instead of indicating that feeble and incipient desire which I fondly, with considerable sympathy and fellow-feeling, imagined I had discovered in these words of the Psalmist.

Nor does Father Schouppe stand alone. Another Belgian, Father van Steenkiste, gives this gloss of our text: "Non optat ut desideret, sed optat adeo ut desideret, i.e. concupiscens desiderat, valde et

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vehementer desiderat". Nay, Maldonatus, whom we are wont to associate with the Gospels only, but who has devoted more than one big folio to the Old Testament, anticipates these moderns by giving as the literal translation of the Hebrew: "Anima mea consternata est"; and this he further interprets by the paraphrase, "defecit anima mea propter amorem quem habet ad mandata tua, Domine".

An American authority may be cited to the same effect, although in the end he permits the interpretation for which we are contending. Dr. Francis Patrick Kenrick, Archbishop of Baltimore, translates Psalm CXVIII. 20: "My soul hath ardently longed for Thy justifications at all times"; and he quotes in a note the Protestant version issued in the reign of James I: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath". But the Archbishop adds: "Olshausen regards this meaning as uncertain. The Syrian and Chaldean Versions agree with the Septuagint and Vulgate."

In my perplexity between these commentators on the one hand and our authorized Latin text and Douay Version on the other, I consulted a Hebrew scholar, Father James McSwiney, S.J., who was kind enough to transliterate and translate each word of the Hebrew original. From his minute examination of the text it appears that the verb which comes first in the sentence is found only two or three times in any form, and once only in the Old Testament in an intransitive sense, namely in the present instance,

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where modern scholars translate it thus: "Crushed is my soul for longing after Thy judgments always". Aben Ezra, of Toledo, a famous Jewish grammarian and commentator, who died A.D. 1168, explains it: "My soul burns with longing to execute Thy judgments," understanding by "judgments" criminal statutes.[1] But St. Jerome, who knew Hebrew better than our modern Hebraists, translated the text *juxta Hebraicam veritatem;* "Desideravit anima mea desiderare judicia tua in omni tempore". The Chaldee Targum (translation and running commentary combined), ascribed to Jonathan ben Uzziel, also renders *Gâr'sah* by "desired". So does the Alexandrian version: *Ἐποθήσεν ἡ ψυχή μου τοῦ ἐπιθυμήσαι τα κρίματα σου ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ.*

But whatever may be said of the original Hebrew, surely the Latin text admits of no such meaning as these writers thrust upon it. "Adopting [says Father McSwiney] the rendering of the Breviary Psalter, as we are more than justified in doing, we can scarcely make the phrase a parallel for the *desiderio desideravi* of Luke XXII. 15; but rather with SS. Augustine and Ambrose, 'I wish to desire'.

[1] Why so here more than anywhere else? A note in the Douay Bible remarks that "in almost every one of the verses of this Psalm (which in number are 176) the word and law of God and the love and observance of it are perpetually inculcated, under a variety of denominations, all signifying the same thing". The seventh verse from the end of Sext is an exception: "Suscipe servum tuum in bonum; non calumnientur me superbi". And there are two or three others.

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The rendering patronized by Schouppe and van Steenkiste requires the infinitive absolute before the *finite* verb: 'gârosh gârsah—asking he asked' (1 Kings xx. 6); that is, 'he urgently asked'. The infinitive absolute in this idiom, when *following* the verb, implies continuance or lasting action; so Schouppe and Co. would need to interpret it, not of intensity of desire, but 'I continue to desire'."

And yet, in spite of all this criticism, Father McSwiney followed Schouppe and Co. when he came three years afterwards to print his extremely learned translation and commentary on the Psalms. When the book came into my hands, I sought eagerly for my text of predilection and was disappointed to find the Vulgate translated thus: "My soul yearns and longs for Thine ordinances at all times".

Father Schouppe himself adds probability to the meaning that we favour when he says that this grand Psalm forms an ascending climax of spiritual progress. The portion assigned to Prime belongs of course to the earliest stage of conversion; Tierce and Sext to the time of struggle and temptation; None to the more perfect state approaching the final triumph. The geological strata of the earth's surface do not always come in the precise order that they ought to come, but crop up occasionally in the wrong places; and certainly it would not be easy to distribute the sentiments expressed in the 118th Psalm into regular successive layers pertaining to the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways respec-

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tively. But at any rate, in such a classification as Father Schouppe advocates, our *concupivi desiderare*, occurring at the beginning, would more naturally denote a timorous and anxious longing rather than the bold and ardent desire into which he would transform it—the wish to be on fire, rather than the actually inflamed desires to which, as I am arguing, it only leads on.

It remains, therefore, pretty clear that, commenting or meditating on this twentieth verse of this 118th Psalm as it occurs in our Breviary, we are at the very least justified in taking the words as they stand in Latin, and we must not make the text say something which it does not say; just as in Psalm XLI.: "Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fortem vivum" is translated: "My soul has thirsted for the strong, the living God," although *fortem* is no doubt a misprint for *fontem*, the Greek being probably πήγην, a fountain, and not πήγον, strong, and "to thirst after the living fountain" is a more natural expression.

At any rate, the constant use of our text by saints and holy writers for sixteen or seventeen hundred years in the peculiar sense I am insisting on is sufficient sanction for the spiritual lesson that may be deduced from it. That lesson is drawn from it by hundreds of saints and ascetic writers from St. Augustine down to our time. St. Augustine must be quoted at considerable length hereafter. Our first witness in favour of the efficacy not only of good desires,

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but even of the mere desire of a desire, shall be a modern saint, namely, St. Ignatius of Loyola. But we shall let him be introduced by Father Roothaan, the fifth latest General of the Society which St. Ignatius founded, separated from the present General, Father Wernz, by Fathers Beckx, Anderledy, and Martin.

In his note on the offering of ourselves to the service of God, which St. Ignatius proposes in full as the colloquy of the Contemplation on the Kingdom of Christ, Father Roothaan refers to that passage of the "Examen Generale"[1] which corresponds with the famous Eleventh of the Summary, where the saint, after saying that "they who seriously follow Christ love and ardently desire" everything that will make them more like to Christ, adds that, if any one, through human feebleness and misery, does not feel such inflamed desires of this sort (*hujusmodi tam inflammata desideria*), he ought at least "to desire to conceive them (*optare ea animo concipere*)". And Father Roothaan winds up by saying expressly, not as a new notion of his own, but as a mere ascetic commonplace: "Et huc referri solet illud Davidicum —To this point that saying of King David is usually referred: 'My soul hath coveted to desire Thy justifications, O God'".

This was the meaning also that another more famous Jesuit, Cardinal Bellarmine, gave to this saying of King David. "He was not able to say

[1] Chapter IV. § 44.

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Concupivit implere, but, confessing his imperfection, he says *Concupivit desiderare;* and this very confession of imperfection is a petition for perfection, which God grants when He makes a man desire the keeping of His Commandments."

Like St. Ignatius and his learned and holy son, Thomas à Kempis bids the poor soul fall back on this desire of good desires. In the thirty-second chapter of the Third Book of "The Imitation," our Lord addresses the Disciple: "Son, thou must not be cast down when thou hearest what the way of the perfect is, but rather be incited thereby to undertake great things or at least to sigh after them with an earnest desire". And in the fourteenth chapter of the almost inspired Book iv. the soul says in turn to her Divine Spouse: "Though I burn not at present with so great a desire as those who are so singularly devoted to Thee, yet by Thy grace I desire to have this same great inflamed desire". The Latin brings out our own special point more emphatically: "Illius magni inflammati desiderii desiderium habeo". *Desiderii desiderium*—the desire of a desire. *Concupivi desiderare.*

A thousand years before Thomas à Kempis, St. Augustine had discussed our text with his usual thoroughness and subtlety. He asks, how can a desire be coveted without that desire being itself actually in our hearts at once? "For it is not (he says) some beautiful substance, as gold, which a man may long for without having, because that is situate

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without, not in the man. This coveting and this desire are both within the soul. Why, then, is the possession of this desire coveted after, as though it were brought in from without? Or how can the coveting of the desire be felt without the desire itself being felt also?" And then the great Penitent Saint, who had himself exemplified this mere desire of a desire—"Release me from my sin, O Lord; but, O Lord, not yet, not yet!"—proceeds to draw a distinction between the longing for some desire when that desire lies within the range of the person's will, and again when it lies outside it. For instance, a sick man who has lost all appetite desires to recover the desire for food; but this latter desire depends on the condition of the palate and other bodily organs, and does not lie within the jurisdiction of the rational will, which, therefore, cannot influence it directly; whereas the desire of observing God's law, and the desire to feel such a desire, both belong to the will, and the latter less perfect desire, if sincere, must needs lead on to the former.

This reasoning of the Bishop of Hippo is reproduced by the Bishop of Geneva 1200 years later. In the second chapter of the twelfth book of his treatise on the Love of God, St. Francis of Sales says: "The sick man has no appetite, but he fain would have it; he has no desire for food, but longs for the desire. It is not given us to know whether indeed we love God above all else, but we do know whether we long to love Him; and directly we are conscious of the

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wish to love, we may be sure that we are beginning to love Him. The animal, sensual part of man desires food, but it is his reason which desires an appetite for food; and inasmuch as the two do not always work together, it sometimes happens that we desire the appetite without having it. But the wish to love, and love itself, depend upon the will; so that no sooner does any one heartily wish to love than he begins to do so, and as the wish gains strength, so does the love. He who fervently desires to love will soon love fervently."

Yes, this desire for the love of God if really sincere, must necessarily lead on at once to that love, as St. Augustine told us a moment ago. For it all comes in the end to be a mere question of the degree of our sincerity, a test of the earnestness of our good will, a diluted form of St. Ignatius's Three Classes of Men,—a spiritual application of the blunt Yankee's measure of sympathy, when certain persons were expressing keen sympathy with a poor widow and her orphans: "Friend, how much do *you* sympathize? I sympathize ten dollars."

However, there can be real sympathy that is never transmitted into dollars; and there can be generous desires that never take to themselves wings, but remain always in their chrysalis or caterpillar state of mere desires. And if we go a little beyond that text which we have repeated so often from the 118th Psalm and speak, not of the desire of a desire, but of good desires themselves, we shall find great

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things said in their favour in God's inspired word and by His saints. But, before going back to more ancient and sacred authorities, let me cite abruptly, out of place, two modern testimonies, from men so different as Newman and Thomas Carlyle. In an out-of-the-way corner of his writings, in his preface to Palmer's "Visit to the Russian Church," Cardinal Newman says: "After all, *pia desideria* are not bad things, though nothing comes of them—at least, though nothing comes of them at once". And Carlyle, whom you would expect to hear growling at mere desires, quotes from some one, "Our wishes are the presentiments of our capabilities". "That is a noble saying, of deep encouragement to all true men. True desire, the monition of Nature, is much to be attended to. But [he adds] we must distinguish between true and false desire, as doctors between true and false appetite."

If we dared to mount so high, we might seek a proof of the efficaciousness of good desires by asking how far the coming of our Divine Redeemer, the Desired of nations, was hastened by the desires of the saints of the Old Law, and especially by the desires of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. The Archangel who announced the coming of our Lord to His Blessed Mother, announced it afar off to the prophet Daniel. Why was Daniel so honoured? God Himself tells us by the lips of Gabriel: "O Daniel, I am come to show it to thee because thou art a man of desires". And twice afterwards the Archangel

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addresses him thus: "Daniel, thou man of desires, understand the words that I speak to thee" (x. 11). And again: "Fear not, O man of desires, peace be to thee. Take courage and be strong."

We know indeed that Daniel did not confine himself to desires. We know that he fasted and prayed and kept himself pure in the midst of a heathen court. His days were as full of good deeds as his heart was full of good desires. But I am justified in laying such emphasis on the thrice-repeated title, which, in the usage of spiritual writers, has become identified with the holy prophet's name—*vir desideriorum*—"the man of desires".

Even this meaning usually given to Daniel's title is disputed by some—for what is there that some will not dispute? But he is sure to be referred to whenever there is question of good desires. For instance, Father Peter Gallwey, S.J., in the holy book, "The Watches of the Passion," which is his chief legacy to pious souls, brings him in when commenting on the generous cry of St. Thomas: "Let us also go that we may die with Him". He tells us that Thomas did not then realize how strong a grace is needed to strengthen a martyr for death; and he goes on to ask: "Are we, then, to undervalue such good desires as those of St. Thomas? Far from it. For if the flesh is weak and if its cowardice sometimes prevails even when the spirit is willing, it will reign supreme and unopposed if we do not at least go as far as good desires. Good desires begin

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the work. If we persevere in prayer, the good desires grow, till at last they are strong enough for the work they have to do, which is to bear away by holy violence the grace of perseverance and the eternal possession of the kingdom of heaven. True, if good desires are not nursed and strengthened, they become blighted blossoms, and the proverb says that hell is paved with such blighted good wishes; but if all good desires were valueless, the angel of God would not have come to Daniel bringing such glad tidings, *because thou art a man of desires*. Every good desire helps the work of the Church. If we say from our hearts, *Thy kingdom come*, this desire helps the spread of grace, according to its fervour. If we say, *Eternal light shine upon them*, this cry is heard, and full value is given to it. With what contrition shall we mourn in Purgatory that we did not multiply and intensify our good desires! At all hours, in all places, we had at our command this way of giving alms to the living and the dead; and, we may say, giving alms also to our God, for if we give peace to men we always give at the same time glory and joy to God."

If, however, there were any doubt as to whether the encomiums bestowed on good desires can be earned by the desires which remain to the end mere desires, the next testimony I shall adduce is clear and express on this point. Refraining from citing many words of Holy Writ that bear strongly on the subject, let us pass over some two thousand years and

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bring forward a great Christian saint as a witness to the efficacy of even such good desires as never blossom into deeds. It is no young saint like Stanislaus Kostka, with his eighteen years, or Agnes, with her thirteen years, who might seem to require to supplement the little they had time to do for God by the great things that they longed to do for Him. It is none of these youthful saints who have earned a day's wages by merely a morning's work without having to "bear the burden of the day and the heats," as the loiterers in the parable were allowed to make up for lost time at the other end of the day by working hard in the cool of the evening. It is none of these, but a saint of full years, hard work, and great achievements, the wonderful saint who did so much for God, that when a clever Frenchman, M. Villemarqué, wished to pay the highest compliment to the Patroness of Ireland, he could think of no grander title to give to St. Brigid than to call her the St. Teresa of the Celts.

St. Teresa had an enthusiastic client in England soon after Shakespeare's time. Even as a Protestant, Richard Crashaw paid eloquent homage to the Virgin of Carmel; and after his conversion he wrote an apology for this "Hymn to the name and honour of the admirable St. Teresa," in which he apostrophizes the saint thus:—

O thou undaunted daughter of desires!

We might consider this a mere random epithet of the poet, and not a happy one to apply to a saint of deeds

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rather than of desires. Yet the title is curiously justified by the words with which St. Teresa began and those others by which she ended her career as a grand religious foundress, reformer, and legislator. When she was appointed Prioress of the Convent of the Incarnation at Avila under the most difficult circumstances possible, these were among the words by which she introduced herself to her not very docile subjects: "I know our weakness, it is great. But if we do not in our deeds come up to all that our Lord asks of us, we will try to do so in our desires." And at the end of her life, after many laborious years, when she was on her deathbed at Alva—the two extremities of her life were Avila and Alva—these were again among the words that her daughters took down carefully from her dying lips: "Always cherish great desires, for from these you will derive immense profit, even though you should never have an opportunity of carrying them into execution".

Here we have the saint speaking distinctly of desires that are to remain for ever desires. One would have thought that such a saint as Teresa, so practical, so hard-working, so energetic, achieving such wonders—we might expect her rather to inveigh against the silliness and feebleness of such desires; yet we have just heard her commending them so earnestly with her last breath. It is but honest, however, to confess that on the same solemn occasion she exhorted her spiritual children "never to fall short by one hair's breadth of what belongs to

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religious perfection". And a similar corrective is always either expressed or understood by spiritual writers when they inculcate the efficacy of good desires.

For instance, Cornelius à Lapide—and he is holy enough to be classed among spiritual writers—commenting on the twenty-third verse of the eleventh chapter of Proverbs, "the desire of the just is all good," compares it with what he calls a well-known saying: "*Tota vita justi est boni desiderium*—the entire life of the just man is the desire of what is good"—which again seems a recollection of St. Augustine, "De Civitate Dei," book XX, chapter XVII.: "Tota vita Christiani desiderium est—a Christian's whole life is desire". Where St. Augustine goes on to say: "Quanto quisque est sanctior et desiderii sancti plenior, tanto est ejus in orando fletus uberior"—implying that *sanctior* and *desiderii sancti plenior* are synonymous terms, and that to be holy is to be full of holy desires.

In this place Cornelius à Lapide says that an easy practice for increasing in every virtue and merit is to conceive frequent and ardent desires of them. For by these desires (he adds) we strengthen and increase in the soul every sort of virtue, even if through poverty, sickness, or other deficiency we are unable to exercise them exteriorly. For instance, a poor man having an efficacious and ardent desire of giving an alms if he had means to do so, may gain more of the merit of almsgiving than a rich man who actually

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gives a large alms with less perfect dispositions. So with a sick person who cannot fast or work. A religious—I am still using the words of Cornelius à Lapide—a religious who is bound by obedience to one sort of work may, by prayer and holy interest and desire, acquire more merit from some other work of zeal than the very person who is actually applied to that work.

This is a doctrine often urged by St. Bernard, and the point is very well brought out in the old story about the preacher and the lay-brother, which has been told often before, but latest by two kindred souls. Rosa Mulholland gives it in prose in her "Spiritual Counsels for the Young":—

A great preacher held the multitude spellbound by his eloquence, as money poured in for the charity in aid of which the sermon was preached. Afterwards, in the silence of the night, the preacher's heart swelled with deep satisfaction at the result of his earnest effort; but an angel of God appeared to him, and told him that his success was due, not to his own gifts, or even his sincerity of purpose, but rather to the prayers of a poor old lay-brother who had sat unseen on the lowest step of the pulpit and prayed while he preached.

Adelaide Procter turns the story into simple verse:—

The monk was preaching: strong his earnest word,
From the abundance of his heart he spoke,
And the flame spread; in every soul that heard,
Sorrow, and love, and good resolve awoke:
The poor lay-brother, ignorant and old,
Thanked God that he had heard such words of gold.

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"Still let the glory, Lord, be Thine alone,"
So prayed the Monk, his heart absorbed in praise:
"Thine be the glory: if my hands have sown,
The harvest ripened in Thy mercy's rays.
It was Thy blessing, Lord, that made my word
Bring light and love to every soul that heard.

"O Lord, I thank Thee that my feeble strength
Has been so blest; that sinful hearts and cold
Were melted at my pleading—knew at length
How sweet Thy service and how safe Thy fold;
While souls that loved Thee saw before them rise
Still holier heights of loving sacrifice."

So prayed the Monk: when suddenly he heard
An angel speaking thus: "Know, O my son,
Thy words had all been vain, but hearts were stirred,
And saints were edified and sinners won
By his the poor lay-brother's humble aid
Who sat upon the pulpit stair and prayed".

There is no need to guard ourselves against any self-delusion about being generous or heroic or full of zeal simply on the strength of pretended desires that cost us nothing and are never brought to the test. It is pretty plain that the saints whom we have cited speak of no dreamy sentimentality, nc spiritual castle-building, but of real, honest desires, eager to turn themselves into deeds whenever the opportunity presents itself or can be caught hold of, if it is shy of coming forward. Our good desires, therefore, must be sincere and earnest, not like those of the coward and the sluggard, of whom it is written in the Book of Proverbs, "He willeth and he willeth not,—*vult et non vult piger*"; and again: "Desires

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kill the slothful, for his hands have refused to work at all" (Prov. XXI. 25). Whereas, as for us, on the contrary, we shall strive to obey the injunction of Ecclesiastes IX. 10: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it earnestly," proving, by our readiness in doing the possible easy things near us, the sincerity of our desire for higher and harder things which God may never ask from us.

For St. Paul says (2 Cor. VIII. 12): "The will is accepted according to that which it hath, not according to that which it hath not". And St. Augustine says: "God crowns the good will when He finds not in His creature the power of doing". And St. Thomas Aquinas says: "All the formal goodness of an act depends on the goodness of the interior act which is elicited by the will". The same saint, when his sister asked him how one could become holy, answered, "by wishing it". And one higher than St. Thomas said: "*Si vis perfectus esse*". All, then, may be said to rest with the human will; for God's grace, which is always wanted, is never wanting.

May that Divine grace strengthen us "never to fall short by one hair's breadth of what belongs to religious perfection"; but may it also prompt us to obey the other admonition which we have already quoted from the same dying saint: "Always cherish great desires". May we cherish them so humbly, so earnestly, so perseveringly, as to enable our good, merciful, and generous Lord to do what His Heart

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is yearning to do—to take the will for the deed, and to reward us not only for what we have done for His sake, but also for what we have desired to do, nay, even for what we have desired to desire. *Concupivit anima mea desiderare.*

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A TALK ABOUT UNCHARITABLE TALK.

We have all of us often been surprised at the disagreeable things that very pious and amiable people can allow themselves to say about other people. Persons who deny themselves every other sinful indulgence make compensation to themselves by indulging pretty freely in this. No doubt conversation is made more spicy by being well sprinkled over with proper names. The index at the end of most volumes is generally nothing more than a list of the persons referred to in the preceding pages; and the summary of most conversations might also be, not an *Index Rerum*, but an *Index Nominum*. When the interest flags, some one breaks in with the question, "Did you hear what happened to So-and-so last week?" In public and private discourse personality is a sovereign somnifuge.

However much we may feel it necessary to tolerate or humour this taste in those with whom we converse, we must, for many reasons both natural and supernatural, strive hard to restrain in ourselves and in others the tendency to talk uncharitably; and under this uncharitableness we may include more than such sins of the tongue as would involve a downright theological fault. For instance, to amount

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to the sin of detraction in this strict theological sense there must be an unjust blackening of the name or lowering of the character of the absent person; and that this injustice should be involved in what is said there are considerations to be looked to about the degree of notoriety already attained by the fault or crime which there is question of publishing to persons who do not know it before. Theologians discuss whether the thing ought to be considered as public if known (for instance) to fifteen persons in a population of a thousand; and some very properly say that this point ought to be left to a prudent judgment that would take into consideration not only the number but the nature of the persons aware of the disparaging fact, their talkativeness, etc.; for, as some bodies are non-conductors of electricity and others very good conductors, so some people are capital conductors of gossip and scandal, and others (God reward them!) are just the reverse.

However, though such discussions and limitations are useful both in theory and practice, let us hope that our own efforts to avoid uncharitableness in thought and word and deed will be more thorough and more generous, and that we shall strive after something higher than merely avoiding positive faults, especially of a serious kind, against charity in our conversations.

It would be very well to try and deepen our conviction of the badness and the foolishness of the habit of talking uncharitably. Unkindness and uncharitable-

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ness, not only in deeds but even in mere words, are bad and wicked because cowardly and cruel and unjust in themselves, even if God had not expressly forbidden them. But God *has* expressly forbidden them; and there are few bad things that God has forbidden so emphatically and with denunciations so often repeated, as the vices of the tongue. Whole pages of Sacred Scripture might be quoted, from Ecclesiasticus especially and the Catholic Epistle of St. James, denouncing with marvellous energy the mischiefs wrought by this unquiet evil, this world of iniquity; and the Divine threats against the uncharitable tongue did not begin with the son of Sirach, nor did they end with the son of Alpheus, St. James the Less. All uncharitableness, therefore, in speech is bad as being opposed to the will of our Father Who is in heaven—to that will, above all, as incarnate in His only begotten Son; opposed to the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His teaching is conveyed in many parts of Scripture, such as that famous passage of the Sermon on the Mount where our Lord contrasts with the ordinances of the Old Law against murder the judgments that His own more perfect law would pronounce against those who slay or wound with the tongue. "Whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Thou fool!' shall be in danger of hell-fire" (Matt. v. 22). Jesus conveyed the same instruction in those words which often fell from His Divine lips: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another".

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The same lesson is impressed upon us in His prayer to His heavenly Father at the Last Supper. "Not for these only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me: that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." And this which Jesus appointed to be the mark of His Church was such in truth, when the heathens used to say, "See how these Christians love one another". Therefore it was that when St. John, the Apostle of Charity, in his extreme old age at Ephesus, was no longer able to preach to his people, he made himself be carried amongst them and repeated often the tender words: *Filioli, diligite alterutrum.* "Little children, love one another." "Why, Father," they said to him, "why do you say the same thing to us so often?" "Because it is the precept of the Lord, and, if that be done, it is enough."

Our Lord practised as He preached. How kind and thoughtful with regard to all, even to those who seemed to deserve no kindness from Him! Nicodemus comes to Him by night through cowardly human respect, and He has no sharp reproach for him but answers all his difficulties. What occasions for exercising this virtue must have filled up the years of our Lord's intercourse, so constant and so intimate, with the disciples, rude and vulgar as they were at first and showing to the end their human frailties and jealousies! This example of our Lord Jesus

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Christ is our perfect model, the imitation of the Heart of Jesus is our chief means of preserving this charity in words. "Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like Thine!" Human considerations will not suffice—good sense, good taste, our social instincts of propriety and politeness. True politeness indeed is in reality mere Christian charity, and constant humility and thoughtfulness for others, along with certain conventional forms superadded which themselves are or ought to be dictated by good sense and good feeling. But we know that this external politeness may be very heartless and hollow.

In certain phases of worldly society it seems that nothing more is needed to pass for a wit than to parade noisily the faults and weaknesses, especially of the timid and retiring, with utter disregard for Christian or even pagan politeness, and with still greater disregard for the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. I remember a friend, who is dead several years, describing such a one who passed himself off as a wit and made people laugh consumedly; but even at the moment my friend said within himself, "Why, anybody could be witty in this way if he made up his mind to say rude and uncharitable things in a loud voice and to hurt the feelings of others, especially of bashful, timid, and silent people". La Bruyére says, "*Il n'est pas ordinaire que celui qui fait rire se fasse estimer*"; "It does not commonly happen that the man who makes people laugh makes himself be respected". And Pascal adds: "*Diseur de bons mots,*

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mauvais caractère". For the "good things" said are generally at the expense of charity. It is in this context that Father Faber remarks: "I believe if we were to make an honest resolution never to say a clever thing, we should advance much more rapidly on the road to heaven". It would not cost some of us very much to keep that resolution; but it was very different with Father Faber himself, and I suspect that he, on this account, is guilty of exaggeration in a letter to Sister Mary Philippa Howard: "Why do anything else but pray? Alas! there is that horrid eating, and that idle sleeping, and then swimming an hour or two every day in that dirty, dingy ocean of venial sins, which in religious houses we call recreation—rightly so called, for I am sure we all need creating over again after every recreation. I always say the *Veni Creator* as I go from the refectory to the recreation-room for those gifts of the Holy Ghost which an old Oratorian Father said were essential to a holy recreation. But it is not of much use to me, for I always say more than I ought to say and much which had better been left unsaid; and I come away weary and peevish because I feel less with God. Why, then, can't we always be praying? What brutes we are, scarcely half so meditative as placid cows."

No, we are not, like cows, ruminating animals, but chiefly talking animals. Speech is the great distinguishing characteristic of the human race. We must talk, even though *in multiloquio non deerit peccatum*

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(Prov. x. 19). One of the uses of "recreation" is to unbend the mind, but another is to give us an opportunity of aiming at St. James's high standard of perfection: "If any man offend not with his tongue, that same is a perfect man"; whereas, on the contrary, "if any man think himself religious, not bridling his tongue, that man's religion is vain".

St. Augustine is said to have set up in his dining-room this couplet:—

Quisquis amat dictis absentis rodere vitam
Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.

I have seen this translated not over well:—

Detractors, listen, and your sentence hear,
If dine you must, you'd better go elsewhere.

This is not much better, perhaps worse:—

Who loves to slander and decry
Those who don't happen to be by,
And on the absent vents his wit—
He at this table must not sit.

Or, to make it a couplet like the original:—

Whoever loves the absent to malign,
He at this table is forbid to dine.

I have never seen St. Augustine's warning posted up; but some of us have seen the following words engraved on a brass tablet in the reception parlour of the Sacred Heart Convent, Mount St. Catharine, Armagh; "I ask you, my dear children, to promise

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one thing—to keep a guard over your tongue and never to offend God by words contrary to charity". This admonition was constantly repeated to the Sisters by the holy Archbishop, Joseph Dixon, who was Primate of all Ireland just after the middle of the nineteenth century.

Although, however, the fear of offending the God of Charity and the wish to be like the meek Heart of Jesus must be our supreme motives for abstaining from sins of the tongue, it is very well to strengthen our purpose by convincing ourselves on lower grounds of the foolishness and ugliness and hurtfulness of all uncharitable talk. It is not only unchristian and unchivalrous, but rude and vulgar and uncivilized. "Politeness" seems a strange word to come into such a discussion, yet we have introduced it already, and it comes into the only phrase I carried away from a Retreat given to the students of Maynooth, sixty years ago, by Dr. David Moriarty, before he was Bishop of Kerry. "Politeness is the fuel of charity." One might expect to see it turned the other way: "Charity is the fuel of politeness," for true politeness is founded on mutual thoughtfulness and consideration for one another. But there is a true and useful significance in the phrase that the Bishop made use of: "Politeness is the fuel of charity," or, as Père Judde, S.J., had said more than a hundred years before him, "*Un peu de politesse sert infiniment à conserver la charité*". "A little politeness is exceedingly useful in preserving charity." Some-

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thing similar is found in the little book entitled "Practical Sayings of Mother Macaulay, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy". "She required the strictest attention to politeness and good manners towards each other. She used often to say that any departure from the rules of good breeding was usually the cause of some breach of charity, while 'good manners add to the value of good works'." That famous woman of the world, Madame Swetchine, as famous for her holiness as for her social charm, said the same thing a little differently: "Politeness is one of the safeguards and exercises of charity".

In the same place where I have jotted down these parallel passages I find three other useful sayings which only bear indirectly on our present subject of uncharitable talk. We must try never to be uncharitable or ill-natured, but always good-natured and good-tempered, and so to keep up around us an atmosphere in which uncharitable talk would be an impossible solecism. The saintly woman whom we quoted last exercised herself the happy influence which she thus describes: "There is a silent Apostleship, a living Credo, an incessant and efficacious mission, which consists in the natural radiance, the true and profound contentment of certain holy souls: for the joy which such persons feel in religion is of all homages to religion the least suspected".

Jules Janin, who says that "Good-humoured people render a service to suffering humanity," has less right to be quoted here than Father Peter Gallwey, S.J.,

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who said once in a Retreat: "A good laugher is a godsend in a community". But he certainly meant his good laugher to be a good-natured laugher, totally free from malice and uncharitableness.

Honesty is the best policy; and so also is charitableness in conversation. The other thing is displeasing both to God and man. I expressed surprise long ago to a fellow-student at Maynooth that a certain acquaintance of ours, who seemed rather frivolous, had received and accepted a high vocation. "I am not a bit surprised," my friend replied, "for I never heard him say an uncharitable word about any one." Even those who are entertained by your ill-natured sallies are unfavourably impressed with regard to yourself; and they know that, when their back is turned, they themselves may be the victims of your spite. This was illustrated one day in a railway carriage in which another friend of mine was travelling with a well-known barrister of the day and a very prominent merchant—all three are dead, but they were notable men, each in his own way, now completely forgotten as we all shall be. The Q.C. (who would now be K.C.) entertained his companion in a lively manner, keeping him busy laughing, and of course personalities were the staple of their pleasant conversation. The barrister left the train at some station with much cordial handshaking. The moment he was gone, his friend said: "That is a bitter pill; I should not like to face him in a witness box".

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Spite and malevolence are peculiarly diabolical. As our Lord declared mutual charity to be the sign of His disciples, so malice and uncharitableness are marks and tokens of the disciples of Satan. The Devil's three names seem to indicate three sorts of evil speaking. *Beelzebub*, the God of flies, is served by those who distress their neighbour by frivolous gossip, annoying trifles, breaches of charity, but not very serious. *Diabolus* is the patron of the detractor and slanderer. *Apollyon*, the Destroyer, is well served by those who ruin souls by seducing words.

I will set down here, out of its proper place, a little incident that has remained in my mind a good many years. Talking with a man whose name would give point to the story, I mentioned one with whom he had carried on a public contest and whom he had not found quite a satisfactory opponent. This manly, upright man changed the conversation at once, saying quickly, "That is a gentleman I don't talk about". He was perfectly right. When you are inclined to feel harshly about certain persons, keep them out of your thoughts; keep them out of your talk. Think and talk of something more agreeable and more useful.

It is well to keep out of our conversation not only persons whom we are inclined to run down, but also persons whom we are inclined to praise too much. There is a subtle form of uncharitableness which pretends to be quite the opposite—namely, to praise absent persons in such a way as to force your hearers

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to demur and to make objections. To introduce certain names into the conversation in certain company might be a breach of charity, even though our share of the conversation was to defend these persons or to praise them highly.

It is not enough to try and check the natural tendency to uncharitable speech when the temptation arises—we must go further back and strive to dry up the spring of bitterness. We must constrain ourselves to be favourable in our judgments or at least to suspend judgment.

> What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted.

We must try and have a charitable heart. It is very stupid and vulgar and narrow-minded to measure every one by our own standard and not to be able to enter into other people's feelings, to appreciate their difficulties, to make allowance for them. A man with a large mind and heart is able to excuse others. Perhaps some persons are charitable and indulgent to others because they are too indulgent to themselves. This is not a proper charity, though it is not so bad as being very hard on others and very easy on yourself.

It is a very unpleasant thing to be uncharitable. Those who are so hardened in spitefulness as not to have any remorse for faults against charity are still more to be pitied. But I hope that *we* have not quite come to *that*. We are vexed with ourselves

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for even failing slightly in this respect; and we wish to save ourselves and those with whom we converse from this petty ignominy. Apart from supernatural remedies, to have the mind filled with good thoughts and the hands filled with good work keeps the tongue safe. The last time Cardinal Newman spoke in public, he apologized for talking about the conversion of England; "but [he said] a man must write and speak on such matters as interest and occupy his mind". Therefore the great remedy for petty vices of the tongue is to have the mind occupied with good things, and from the fullness of the heart the mouth will speak. I remember hearing a certain good and very gifted woman remark of a certain good and very gifted man (who is in heaven now, I am sure—the other isn't there yet) that "he had always four or five wholesome enthusiasms on his hands"—that is, he was able to take an interest, and a warm interest, in a great many good things. No fear of *him* being uncharitable. This is like Mr. Hamilton Aïdé's description of "Carr of Carrlyon". "His talk was very pleasant—not so brilliant that it burned you up, or so powerful that it knocked you down, but characterized by a gentlemanly enthusiasm upon a variety of subjects which you felt yourself encouraged to discuss with him."

These not rigidly consecutive remarks had a chance at first of being called "A Talk about Talk"; but their scope got narrowed down to one sort of talk. I will end with a paragraph on the wider

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theme, which helps our special subject to this extent that good talk bars the way to bad talk.

Sir Joshua Reynolds asked Dr. Johnson how he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He said he had made it a rule to do his best on every occasion and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language in which he could put it; and that by constant practice and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him. Quinctilian (x. 7) says something similar about Cicero. "*Ne id quidem tacendum est quod eidem Ciceroni placuit, nullum nostrum usquam negligentem esse sermonem: quicquid loquemur, ubicumque sit pro suâ scilicet portione perfectum.*" It might be well to make some attempt, within due limits, to copy this practice and follow this advice of Cicero, Quinctilian, and Samuel Johnson. Some people are slovenly in their ordinary talk—and this not through shyness or modesty; quite the contrary; they consider that their most careless, slipshod nonsense is good enough for those they are talking with, that the listeners are not worth taking pains for. On the other hand, I recall with edification the thoroughness, the painstaking earnestness, with which certain men of great learning, whom all that knew revered, discussed questions with their younger brethren as if on perfectly equal terms. The man who is chiefly before my mind as I write these last

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words[1] gave it as his opinion that in no matter are persons who are trying to lead virtuous lives so liable to commit serious faults as they are in this matter of uncharitable talk.

[1] Father Edmund O'Reilly, S.J., at one time Professor of Theology at Maynooth, author of "The Relations of the Church to Society".

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"CHILD, GIVE ME THY HEART."

THERE is a little phrase of Sacred Scripture which ought, I think, to take us greatly by surprise, not so much in itself as on account of the place where it is found. *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi.* "Child, give Me thy heart." If we heard this entreaty, with its simple and yearning tenderness, for the first time, without knowing that it was an inspired text, and if we set ourselves to guess where it had been taken from, we should hardly guess right.

And first of all, could we conjecture who it is that is supposed to speak these tender words, and to whom? Is it some fond mother as described in some tragedy, or some pathetic poem, pleading perhaps in vain for the long arrears of love accumulating through the unconscious infancy and too heedless childhood of her son? Or even supposing these words to be, as they are, addressed by the great God to His poor human creatures, we might more probably imagine that such an endearing expression of tenderness would be placed upon God's lips by some Christian saint like Bernard or Francis of Sales or by some pious writer of these days of ours, when we strive to be more affectionate, at least in words.

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But no, it is under that sterner and colder dispensation, which, though rich in God's graces, is yet denied the name of Law of Grace—it is in the Old Testament, in the twenty-third chapter of the Book of Proverbs, that we find recorded this yearning entreaty of the Creator to the creature: "My child, give Me thy heart". *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi.*

Nay, we might date this cry of God's love much farther back in the past. If we may not dare to find in it an echo of the everlasting love of the Eternal Father for the Eternal Son in the adorable abysses of the Trinity, at least it is in substance the original injunction laid upon our first parents in the very moment of their creation. The moment the first human heart began to beat within the bosom of Adam, the moment the second human heart began to beat within the bosom of our Mother Eve, at that moment their infinite and almighty Creator, who was also their tender Father, said to each of them in turn: "My son, give Me thy heart; my daughter, give Me thy heart". Indeed, God created the human race for no other purpose but only this, that there might be hearts to whom He could address this petition: *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi.*

This simple phrase furnishes a key to all the dealings of God with man. It does not explain—for mysteries cannot be explained—but it summarizes, it announces clearly and briefly, the mystery of mysteries, which alone explains all other mysteries:

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namely, the supreme mystery of God's love for man.

And is not this indeed a mystery—nay, as we have just called it, the mystery of mysteries? Would it not be a mystery that the great God could even tolerate our love? And what is it now, that He not only tolerates, but yearns for our love—entreats us to love Him—pleads for the possession of our hearts? "My child, give Me thy heart."

Yes, He, the infinite and eternal God, who alone is, and by whom are all things that are; He, who is infinite in wisdom, infinite in majesty, infinite in beauty, infinite in power; He before whom the strength of armies, and the more terrible strength of the enraged elements all the exhibitions of power and wrath and magnificence, are as the petty whims of an infant fretting in its helplessness; He before whom the most eloquent accents, the sublimest imaginations, are as the stammerings of an idiot; He, who in His infinite and all-sufficing being depends for His happiness and glory on all His creatures infinitely less than the sun at noonday depends for his brilliancy on having one of his rays reflected in one tiny dewdrop that cannot bend down even one little blade of grass: that He, the God of Heaven and Earth, the God of Time and Eternity, should deign thus to beg for what is His sovereign right—("My child, give Me thy heart")—that God should thus from His everlasting throne look down with solicitude and yearning for the love of our poor

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hearts—this, this is an utterly incomprehensible mystery, but it alone explains all the other mysteries and marvels of our faith.

This divinest mystery, like all things Divine, is from eternity. God is love, and He has loved us with an everlasting love. It was this everlasting love, this unbeginning and unending love, which in the bosom of the Eternal Father, when the ruin of the human race was seen, made the Son of God exclaim, "Behold, I come". And when man was created, and, abusing his liberty, fell, it was this love, which in the very moment of the fall would not leave our first parents even for one dark hour in the despair and desolation of the first sin, but instantly brightened their long centuries of penance by the promise of the Redeemer.

It was this love that inspired the patriarchs and prophets with such ardent longings for the coming of Him who was to come—longings infinitely less ardent than His own longing to come in the time appointed in the eternal counsels. And it was this everlasting love that made God utter by the inspired pen of him whom we call the Wise Man that tender appeal, on which we are at present meditating: *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi.* "My child, give Me thy heart."

What answer has God received from the hearts that He has made? Out of all the millions and millions and millions of hearts that have throbbed with life, how many have throbbed with a true and

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faithful love? God indeed did not make His appeal in vain. From the first and all along there were noble and loving hearts that gave themselves back to God who had given them all. Yet neither our first parents nor the holiest of their descendants; none of the saints of the Old Law from Abel, slain by his brother, to Isaac, ready to be sacrificed by his father, and thus both of them prefiguring Jesus, —neither these nor Joseph, son of Rachel, nor any other on to Joseph, spouse of Mary, could give the full allegiance of their hearts to God without a flaw, without a break, without a pause. The blight of sin was upon them all.

Not even Mary herself, the Immaculate, "our tainted nature's solitary boast," could fully satisfy the yearning of the Creator. She, that purest and brightest of creatures, was still a mere creature and could not give to God an infinite love. *That* was reserved for the tenderest and most pathetic moment in the entire history of God's relations with mankind: which tenderest moment surely was the first moment of the Incarnation, the first beating of that Heart which was at once a human heart and the heart of God. Then indeed the Eternal Father could say those words in all the plenitude of their meaning and could be sure of an adequate response. "My Son, co-equal to Me in nature, and yet true man with a human heart, give to Me the infinite love of that Heart. My Son, give Me Thy Heart." *Præbe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi.*

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And now the Son of God in turn takes up these words and addresses them to the souls that He has come to redeem. They are not only spoken by God to man, but by the First-born among many brethren to His brethren, by the God-man to His fellow-men. If men had too often received those words coldly when coming from "the King of Ages, immortal and invisible," how could they be deaf to the appeal when made by the Heart of Jesus? Jesus spoke that word from the crib of Bethlehem and from the cross of Calvary, and during every moment that His Heart has throbbed since then, especially in that sacrament of love which is the uttermost fulfilment and realization of every prophecy, and promise, and type, and figure, and allegory, and parable, setting forth God's love for man. At every moment since the first moment that a human heart beat in heaven, the Heart of our Saviour after the Ascension, that cry has rung (too often, alas! unheard) in the heart of every member of every successive generation of the children of men: "My child, give Me thy heart".

But that word, spoken a thousand years before the coming of our Lord, was never spoken so plainly as when, more than a thousand years after His coming, He pointed to His Sacred Heart and said: "Behold this Heart, so loving and so little loved".

A true devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the best answer that we can make to that appeal that we have repeated so often: "My child, give Me thy heart". Let us strive habitually to hear our

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good God addressing this entreaty to our hearts, not only in the graver emergencies of life when this thought will repel the tempter and strengthen the weakness of the spirit and the flesh—not only then but in all the little occasions that make up one of our quiet days, in which we can exercise virtue and gain merit by acting always in this spirit of faith and love. The best consolation for every sorrow, the best antidote for every poison, the best safeguard against every temptation, the best support through the weariness of life and the dread of death, is to remember that God loves us, loves each of us with a personal love, and that to each of us He says at this moment and always: "My child, give Me thy heart".

May this aspiration of God's heart haunt us perpetually, making itself heard through all the pleasures and all the pains of life, down to the last pang of death; and in death itself may the last cry of our hearts be, "My Jesus, mercy!" which then will mean: "Jesus, my Lord and my God! now at last I do indeed yield to Thy entreaty and give to Thee my heart for ever". For even in heaven God will for ever say to each of the blessed: "My child, give Me thy heart"; and the heaven of heavens will be that we shall not then be able to say Him nay, but must needs for ever give Him love for love and heart for heart.

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THE FOUR FIATS.

THERE is no language except English that has naturalized both as a noun and a verb of its own the Latin word *fiat*, "be it done". "The assize Judge has fiated the presentments of the Grand Jury." This newspaper phrase, which is now obsolete, points to a meaner exercise of authority than Cowper's couplet, with which, however, it is connected etymologically:—

> Why did the *fiat* of a God give birth
> To yon fair Sun and his attendant Earth?

This word, *fiat*, is employed on four great occasions which are described in the Sacred Scriptures; and the associations connected with three of these occasions help to make this small word a very effective habitual ejaculation for us all, condensing into a breath the expression of faith, hope, submission, resignation, and devotion. Let us dwell on each of these four *fiats*.

I.

The first of the four *fiats* is the original fiat of the Creator, to which the religious-minded poet has already alluded. This word, *fiat*, "let it be done, let

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it be made," gleams forth upon the opening page of the world's history. The sacred historian puts the story of creation into human language which long afterwards the Royal Psalmist condensed into the phrase: "He spoke, and all things were made". Among the Creator's acts mentioned separately in the first chapter of Genesis one remembers best *fiat lux* (Gen. I. 38): "Let light be made, and light was made; let light be, and light was". No wonder that the poor pagan Longinus in his famous treatise which has for its theme sublimity itself,—*Περὶ Ὕψους*—cites this inspired phrase, however it may have reached him, as an example of true sublimity. A similar formulary might be supposed to be used in all the other departments of Nature, to denote the instantaneous efficacy of God's omnipotent word, had He chosen to bring things into being thus. Let all the planets roll in their orbits round the central sun; and so it was. Let the life-sustaining blood circulate in the veins of every living thing; and it was done. Let the woods be filled with singing birds; and the woods were filled with singing birds.

So was God's creative fiat obeyed instantly from the first throughout all the realms of Nature; and so it is obeyed still at every moment, for that original fiat is not past and gone but rings on for ever and works its will for ever. For, as we often remind ourselves at the beginning of a retreat, we are created afresh at each instant. Preservation is a perpetual creation. We of ourselves gravitate back toward

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the abyss of nothingness from which we were drawn, and we need at every instant to be upheld by God's hand, just as a ball lifted up by a man's hand into the air will not remain there if the hand be withdrawn. It is a mere truism, but truisms do not cease to be true, that it is only God's infinite power that sustains us this moment in life, and enables us to think these obvious thoughts and to bow down with adoring love before the majesty of our Creator, in whom we live and move and are.

II.

But God is much more than our Creator even in this extended sense. His creation was blighted from the beginning. His first human creatures sinned; yet, by a stupendous stretch of His mercy, God did not leave them for one hour in despair; for His very sentence of condemnation contained the promise of redemption. That promise was fulfilled when the second *fiat* was spoken—the *fiat* of the Incarnation. This mighty word was not now spoken by God, but by one of His poor human creatures. He who said in the depths of the eternal counsels, "Behold I come," would not come till Mary's *fiat* had gone forth, bidding Him come, giving Him (as it were) leave to come. God's archangel was sent as ambassador to the lowly handmaid of the Lord, who, when the Divine will was sufficiently made known to her, said meekly: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Luke I. 38): "Be it done to me according to Thy

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word". *Fiat* more momentous in its effect than even the Divine *fiat* of creation, for the Church every day, after the offertory of the Mass, reminds God Himself that He who founded the human race in a marvellous manner, reformed and redeemed it in a manner yet more marvellous. *Mirabiliter condidisti et mirabilius reformasti.*

III.

The second *fiat* was spoken at the beginning of our Redeemer's earthly course; the third was spoken at its close. He had come to live with us for a time that we might live with Him for all eternity. This true life was to be purchased for us by His death. He had come, not only to live for us but to die for us: that was the appointed expiation of our sin. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," says the Apostle who refused to glory in anything save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This atonement unto blood began before the Cross; it began first openly in the garden of Gethsemane as the fall had taken place in the garden of Paradise. And it was there, during the prayer of the Agony, that the third *fiat* was uttered, the *fiat* of Redemption: for it was the Sacrifice of Calvary then so near, and the dreadful preliminaries of insult and torment which were just going to begin—this full accomplishment of the Redemption was what our Divine Lord accepted finally when He prayed: "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me: nevertheless not My will but Thine be done". *Non*

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mea voluntas sed tua fiat (Luke XXII. 42). Again that grand word, *fiat!* The living God, the Author of life, was about to exercise the awful power which the *fiat* of the Annunciation had conferred upon Him —the power to die.[1]

> What, Woman, is My debt to thee
> That I should not deny
> The boon thou dost demand of Me?
> "*I gave Thee power to die.*"

IV.

Finally, the same lips that uttered the *fiat* of Divine Redemption taught our lips to utter the *fiat* of human co-operation. In the prayer that He bade us address to our Father who is in heaven, the central petition is: *Fiat voluntas tua* (Matt. VI. 10). "Thy will be done." *Fiat.* He might have let us keep even closer to His Blessed Mother's word: *Fiat mihi secundum verbuum tuum.* Let us strive to keep close to her in more than words; let us strive to make our acts of submission and acceptance with some far-off resemblance to the perfect dispositions with which the Blessed Virgin said: "Be it done to me according to Thy word".

These words on her lips on the first Feast of the Annunciation were far more an acceptance of the trials and griefs that made her Queen of Sorrows, than of the privileges and glories that make her Queen of Heaven. With some degree of the same

[1] This daring phrase is Father Tabb's.

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conformity to God's will we wish to accept every trial, trouble, hardship and toil, that the rest of our earthly probation may hold for us in store—every loss, every privation, every sickness down to our death-sickness, every pain down to the final pain of dying, when in our last conscious moment we hope to have our souls free from sin and full of contrition, faith, hope and charity. But hope, indeed, will then have already almost ceased to be hope, the end will be so near and so sure. Yet even at the end and after the end there will still be room for our human *fiat* of submission and acceptance. Beatitude is the consummation of the first *fiat* of God the Creator, of the second *fiat* of the Mother of the Redeemer, of the third *fiat* of her Divine Son, of the fourth *fiat* repeated a countless number of times in the life of each of those whom He has redeemed. This last *fiat* will go on for ever, but its object will no longer be the acceptance of toils, duties, trials, sufferings; but the acceptance of the joy and glory of heaven. Our last exercise of obedience will be, in a certain sense, the hardest of all, for it will be to obey the summons of our merciful Judge: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord". That joy will not enter into us, but we shall enter into it, as if plunging into an infinite ocean of blessedness to be for ever, in our heavenly measure and degree, happy with the happiness wherewith God Himself is eternally happy. *Fiat!* "Be it done to me according to Thy word."

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SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT HUMILITY.

THIS is not going to be a solid and methodical, but only an irregular and superficial discussion of the subject of humility; yet even so it may suggest some useful and practical notions, chiefly, perhaps, by way of correction or contradiction to the views put forward. It will be safer not to venture on a formal definition of Humility, but rather to trust at first to the general notion that we all have of that virtue, accurate enough in the main, though perhaps confused in some of its applications.

It will emphasize further the unconventionality of my treatment of the subject if I begin with a whimsical newspaper scrap which I have preserved for this precise purpose. "A debating society has been discussing the question: Which of the two is worse—to think you have reached the top of the stairs when there is one step more, or to think there is one step more when in reality you have reached the top?" Towards the solution of this problem I find that I have at some undefined date in the past contributed this annotation in the margin: "The first of these mistakes is the worst, because you may chance to bark your shin severely against the remaining step,

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which you imagined to be non-existent; whereas, when you raise your foot *in vacuo*, a harmless stumble on the lobby is the worst consequence to be dreaded". And then I applied this to the present subject by saying:—

"It may be well to add that this worst mistake is also the least likely. Humility is common sense supernaturalized; and common sense will keep us from imagining that we have reached the top when we have done nothing of the sort; and on the other hand I hope it is quite possible for a man to have mounted higher, to have advanced much nearer to perfection, than he himself imagines. I wonder shall an agreeable surprise of that sort be one of our first joyful experiences in the other world."

There is room for an ingenious and useful disquisition on the virtuous side of certain vices and the vicious side of certain virtues. For instance, in the present context, there are subtle shades of humility that may deceive the untrained eye. We all know that mistakes can be made about the exercise of humility—various actions and modes of proceeding may seem to be dictated by humility, whereas true humility would have prompted directly opposite behaviour.

Humility is not laziness, or timidity, or pusillanimity, though these are often mistaken for it, especially by the lazy, the timid, and the pusillanimous. The definitions of humility that St. Thomas gives in the *Secunda Secundae* of his "Summa" must not be

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understood in any such sense. In one place (22dae quaest. 161, art. 1) he defines it *virtus quae temperat et refraenat animum ne immoderatè tendat in excelsa* —"a virtue which restrains and curbs the soul lest it should aim immoderately at lofty things"; and in the next article it is defined *virtus quâ aliquis reprimit seipsum ne feratur in ea quae sunt supra se* —"a virtue by which a man represses himself, restrains himself so as not to let himself be carried away towards things above him". By these definitions, or by what they imply, we are not forbidden to aim at lofty things, but we are forbidden to do so in an immoderate manner: for St. Thomas does not run counter to Father Baltassar Alvarez's exhortation: "Let us not degenerate from the high thoughts of the sons of God". No, humility is not sloth or cowardice—neglecting to use to the utmost any gifts that God has given to us, and doing so under the pretence, forsooth, of escaping the glory that would pursue us if we exercised them to the full. We need not be afraid; we may boldly do our best without any danger of disturbing the world's equanimity or setting the Thames (or the Liffey or the Yarra Yarra) on fire.

Humility again is not *falsehood;* it does not prompt us to deny the good qualities that we possess or to accuse ourselves of evil of which we are guiltless. The saints, indeed, and those who strive very earnestly to be saintly, are ingenious in keeping out of even their own sight those qualities and circum-

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stances which tend to raise them above their fellows. They reverse that fable of Æsop's about the two wallets. Ordinary people put their own faults and shortcomings into the wallet which is slung behind their backs, out of sight and out of mind; whereas they carry the faults of their neighbours in the wallet in front of them, and have these constantly under their eyes and under their nose. Saints and holy people, the really humble, do the very opposite; they just reverse the arrangement. But no doubt the humility of the saints remains, to a certain extent, a mystery to such creatures as *we* are; and we are not much helped by such material illustrations as the following: Suppose there is a procession with lighted tapers in the open-air on a sunny day; if one of the processionists holds up his light against the sun, it seems like a blot upon the sunlight, whereas the lights in the hands of the others, seen against some dark background, may show a bright flame. Even thus, true humility, especially of the heroic order that constitutes saintliness, does not look down but upward. The humble do not keep comparing themselves with miserable mortals like themselves: they look to God, and, seen in God, their good is little and their evil is great, and only the evil part is all their own.

I know nothing of Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees" except that it is not so innocent as its name would lead one to suppose, being an ingenious treatise which tries to prove that private vices are public bene-

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fits. Certainly I can imagine a man doing more effective work from motives that would hardly bear inspection; and so what is blameworthy in the individual might be beneficial to the community. Is this the case with regard to what is sometimes called a little harmless vanity? Sir Henry's Taylor's stepmother wróte to him once ("Autobiography," vol. I. p. 60):—

"How frequently do we complain of the intolerable vanity of authors! How few authors we should have if it were not for vanity; and though it is a very disgusting quality, even when it is founded, as it *sometimes is*, upon valuable stuff, we are glad to have it spoiling the flavour in some degree, rather than not have the good stuff at all."

This quotation regards the question from a merely natural point of view. But Nature has a great deal to say to such things, and our aim must be to raise it up and guide it right. I hope there is no trace of semi-pelagianism in saying that humility, true politeness, self-denial, unselfishness, devotion to duty, and every other good quality that we should wish to possess, are all founded on natural common sense, elevated and sustained by grace.

It would be an interesting question to discuss how far human feelings—emulation, rivalry, and a mild and amiable sort of vanity—can be motives of action for souls that are anxious to be perfect. Even St. Thomas Aquinas did not, I suppose, acquire all his marvellous learning and write all his books from the

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very highest motives always; but he took a human pleasure in discoveries, arguments, discussions, controversies, etc. Would the great Suarez really have preferred, as we are told that he said he would prefer, to lose all the learning he had amassed by the toil of years sooner than omit one hour of meditation enjoined by the Rule? This is supposed in the question which Father Joseph Guizzardi puts to each of us in his "Retreat".[1] "Estne tibi tam cordialis meditationis horae amor quam fuit R. P. Francisco Suarez, ut potius vellet totam doctrinam suam perditam quam unam meditationis horam omissam: doctrinam, inquam, tot tomis inclusam ut vix exstet in Europâ qui omnes libros ejus paginatim legerit?" "Have you as hearty a love of the hour's meditation as Father Francis Suarez had, so that he would rather have lost all his learning than have omitted one single hour of meditation—learning contained in so many folio volumes that there is hardly a man in Europe who has read all his books page after page?"

To descend to a lower level, the eminent theologians and other distinguished men with whom we ourselves have been in any way acquainted, either by personal intercourse or by hearing familiar anecdotes about them—do they not generally seem to have been a good deal swayed by what we have ventured to call a little harmless vanity?

Of those who have achieved distinction in wide

[1] Translated from Italian into Latin by Father Andrew Eschenbrender, at Prague, in the year 1728.

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spheres or in narrow, how few are they that have had their greatness (whatever it was) "thrust upon them"?—to use the phrase of one of Shakespeare's fools. They have had to "achieve their greatness". They have gone in for it. They had first to believe in themselves before they could get others to believe in them. It may seem a little grotesque to join together men so unlike and so unequal; but could we imagine Dean O'Brien of Limerick, or Dr. Murray of Maynooth, or (here comes in the grotesque inequality) O'Connell himself, doing the work they did respectively, without the vanity which they all three, in different manners and degrees, undoubtedly betrayed?

There is another public man more of O'Connell's stamp than the two good and gifted men I have named with him. In Mr. Wilfrid Ward's "Life of Cardinal Wiseman" (vol. I. p. 257) this passage occurs:—

"He did not always get credit for the high motives that inspired him, but was supposed to be actuated by personal motives, such as vanity and ambition. False: but he was not and could not be indifferent to fame; and a certain kind of ambition (such as he somewhere, I think, in his sermon on the Conversion of St. Paul, describes as an incentive to virtuous and noble deeds) was doubtless not alien to his nature".

Cardinal Wiseman was bound to do his best for the credit of the Church, and, as nuns sometimes write tautologically, "for the A.M.D.G.". But is every

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one bound to do his best? Was Lance bound to do his best? Lance is one of the boys in Father David Bearne's "Doings in the Dale". He had an exquisite tenor voice, which he displayed to the utmost at a Christmas entertainment given by him and his brothers to the people of the neighbourhood. The next morning he had a serious talk with his mother, in which, among other things, he confesses: "I thought such a lot of myself all through, and I was always trying to make them clap like anything". To which his mother answers: "It would have been wrong if you had not tried to do your very best". Would it? I suppose so. But there are sundry difficulties about the subject: how far we are bound to aim at success, and how far we are allowed to take pleasure in success; how far we can Christianize Alexander's favourite line of the "Iliad":

Αιεν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων.

How far we may take advantage in ourselves and others of the spirit of emulation, which Dr. Johnson considered immoral as an incentive for youthful students, thinking that it was more wholesome for boys to have the stimulus applied to them at the other end. The difficulties of this subject would certainly carry me far out of my depth. I will, therefore, according to my wont, take refuge in a quotation. In a very edifying account, which I was once allowed to read, of the last days of Mother Imelda Magee, a gifted and holy Dominicaness, who

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died the death of a saint in Sienna Convent, Drogheda, many years ago, a letter of direction from the saintly Bishop of Dromore, John Pius Leahy, was given. The following passage bears directly on our point:—

"You want to know whether there is vanity or imperfection in the feeling of success in composition, and in the pleasure derived from the approbation of others. I think the answer would be clearest from a comparison with the pleasure of taking food. That pleasure is given us by God to encourage us to support our bodily strength, and if we direct the pleasure to that end, with a view of being able to labour so as to please God in our various avocations, there is no imperfection committed; whereas, there would be if we were to eat merely for the pleasure of eating. Apply this rule to the pleasure of literary success."

This zest in our work, of which the Bishop speaks, this earnest effort to succeed and this keen pleasure in success, do not of course constitute vanity, and are legitimate and praiseworthy when kept within proper bounds and in strict accordance with facts. But there are some who escape the charge of vanity in a less innocent way. I am not sure whether I am quoting somebody else or only myself when I remark that some persons are too proud to be vain. They do not hanker unduly after the esteem of others, but they make abundant compensation to themselves by fostering a very high regard for their own excellence. They have such a profound appre-

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ciation of their own merits (which are chiefly latent) that they can afford to dispense with the appreciation of others. Their condition is extremely dangerous.

Yes, some people are too proud to be vain. They are so wrapped up in themselves, they have so comfortable a conviction of their own transcendent merits, that they do not need to have it supplemented by the applause of others. There is a certain humility in the craving that vain people show for the esteem of their fellow-creatures. An example of the other sort —of the stronger but less amiable men who can stand aloof, not caring or not seeming to care what others think of them—was such a man as Charles Stewart Parnell. In the last book which Mr. James Bryce published before going as British Ambassador to the United States—"Studies in Contemporary Biography"—he writes thus of Parnell:—

"Pride was so strong in him that it almost extinguished vanity. Parnell did not seem to seek occasions for display, frequently neglecting those that other men would have chosen, seldom seeming to be elated by the applause of crowds, and treating the House of Commons with equal coolness whether it cheered him or howled at him."

This sort of freedom from vanity will do these people no good either in this world or the next. Not in this world: for, having an abundant supply of self-appreciation to be consumed on the premises, they have no necessity to go out of themselves and exert themselves in order to earn the good appreciation of

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their neighbours; and so they are liable to be spiritless, languid, self-centred, cynical, without enthusiasm for any good object, doing nothing, and caring for nothing. Not in the life to come: for this is not true Christian humility, but only another and worse form of pride combined with sloth, stupidity, selfishness, self-conceit, and contempt of all others except one's contemptible self.

True humility is a great grace and gift from God. God not only resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble, as He has warned us in those very terms, once in the Old Testament and twice in the New, but it is He who gives us grace to be humble. Yet He lets us help Him. In this work also we are, as St. Paul tells us, His *συνέργοι*, His co-workers, His co-operators, His helpers. *Dei adjutores sumus* (1 Cor. III. 9). We must make use of certain means and devices to ground ourselves well in cheerful, solid humility.

Probably we are not much helped by the denunciations that spiritual writers are fond of pouring out upon our miserable bodies. The old ascetics scolded the body in such round terms that we generally, in quoting them, are fain to shelter ourselves behind Boileau's dictum:—

Le Latin dans les mots brave l'honnêtetê.

Even the Mellifluous Doctor himself may be left untranslated when he bids us bear these three things always in mind—what we were, what we are, what we shall be. *Quid fuisti nisi sperma foetidum? Quid*

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es nisi vas stercoreum? Quid eris nisi cibus vermium? This indeed is only another form of the admonition of the Holy Ghost, which the Church on Ash Wednesday repeats with realistic symbolism: "Remember, man, that thou art dust and into dust thou shalt return". But meanwhile the dust is marvellously transformed and transfigured; and here we are on God's earth, body and soul, living an animal and a spiritual life. We forget the lowliness of our origin, and we provoke that stern question with which Abraham Lincoln's favourite poem[1] begins and ends:—

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

and that stern rebuke of St. Bernard: *Erubesce, superbe cinis!* "Be ashamed, proud ashes!"

The best means of being humble is to live in the presence of God and in the consciousness of our own nothingness. A rustic is very confused and abashed at having to dine at the table of a person of distinguished rank. He feels his awkwardness in every movement and thinks everything an offence against good manners. Nay, a shy, modest boy, when he has to dine in the company of strangers, before he has had the opportunity of mixing in society, will be

[1] It is given in full in the "Irish Monthly," vol. XXIX. p. 163 (1901), where it is attributed to William Knox. The above is the last line as well as the first; and all the intervening lines, which are numerous, do nothing, but develop very solemnly but very monotonously the import of mortality without the slightest allusion to immortality. It is not a Christian poem.

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very reserved and watchful, lest he should be guilty of any oversight or social impropriety. So, too, a man in a country whose social customs differ from his own. In a clever and excellent American novel, "The Rise of Silas Lapham," one of the most effective situations is where the hero, who from lowly beginnings has acquired fortune, position, and a certain amount of refinement, gives a very important dinner and makes all the arrangements on the most sumptuous scale, but at the last moment, when the guests are at his door, he is in an agony of doubt as to whether he ought to receive them with his gloves on.

Haec per allegoriam dicta sunt. These things may serve as illustrations of the humbling effect that our position ought to have on our habitual demeanour and habit of mind, on our attitude in the presence of God and of His blessed saints and angels. How can we find it hard to be humble and diffident, being what we are, what even we ourselves know ourselves to be?

"But God is so good He overlooks our mistakes. We cannot be afraid of being seen by *Him*."

Now this is the very point I wanted to bring out; this is what seems to me to be the aggravating circumstance, increasing the absurdity and the guilt of the poor creature that dares to be proud in the presence of His Creator. It is the very kindness of our kind and well-bred host who tries to cover our confusion, who pretends not to notice our blunders —this is the very thing that distresses us and makes

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us feel our unworthiness. If he rudely laughed at us, we might be able to stand on our dignity and say to ourselves: "It is he who is really vulgar, not I, for *I* am merely inexpert at certain little conventions of society, but *he* has a vulgar soul".

Somewhat in the same way God's condescension in bearing with us, His goodness and our own vileness, and all the faults we can see in ourselves, and the faults that His eyes can discern in the part of our conduct which to us seems irreproachable—this is the secret of cheerful humility, to keep our souls in this attitude towards God.

Yes, cheerful humility. Not too angry with ourselves, for *that* might be a subtle pride, as if such meanness was something very surprising in us instead of being a mere matter of course. And to go back to the point of view from which we are regarding the subject: as the best and wisest and really most polite conduct in the circumstances that we imagined at the beginning would be for that plain, unpolished rustic to confess his ignorance and beg them to tell him the proper thing to do in certain emergencies, and as the vulgarest and silliest course would be to brazen it out and pretend that he knew everything —so, too, in supernatural things the highest dignity, the greatest wisdom, is bravely and cheerfully to humble ourselves in God's sight. *Ut jumentum factus sum apud te*—"I am become as a beast before Thee" (Ps. LXXII. 23). Indeed the difficulty is to see how any rational being could in theory be anything

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else than humble. Practical difficulties, temptations, inconsistencies—these we may be fully prepared for. But at least the theory of humility is plain and simple enough, not only a truth but a truism. And that is one of the reasons why God is so much in love with humility—because humility is only the truth, and God loves truth, as He is the Truth. *Ego sum Veritas.*

Another recipe for getting humility is to remind ourselves how little of our own there is in what we might be inclined to make an excuse for pride. Ecclesiasticus (x. 9) asks (ungrammatically as it sounds, but not really so), "Why is dust and ashes proud?"—and even the dust and ashes are not our own. We need not, for several reasons, dwell on the fleetingness of certain personal advantages, real or imaginary, out of which some members of the human race manage to extract matter for pride and self-conceit, one of the reasons for passing them over being, perhaps, that we have sense enough to know that we don't possess these attributes in any very alarming degree. The thing that is most our own is the cultivation that we have been able to bestow on the natural powers of our minds. That also from first to last is God's work; and even our co-operation has been so feeble and so fitful, so dependent on outward circumstances and chances, that it ought not to be hard for us to refrain from any overweening sense of our own excellence on that score. The thought, for instance, of all the pains that went to the acquisition of any skill that we may think we possess in

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any sort of work, ought to save us, if we have a fair share of common sense and good taste, from making ourselves ridiculous by putting on airs in consequence, even in the secrecy of our own hearts. And then how long shall even *that* be ours? Not only the full stop of death—many a shorter pause, many a comma and semicolon, may occur to remind us of our abject weakness and helplessness and poverty. Why, even a very passing sickness, a qualm, a *malaise*, that is hardly sickness at all, modifies our notions of such things. Was any man ever self-conceited while very sea-sick?

It ought indeed to be very difficult for poor creatures, such as we are, to wax impudent, to put on airs, to be proud, to be vain. The difficulty ought rather to be how to rise to a proper sense of our dignity; and there is really some excuse for that sham humility which we have already denounced, which errs in the opposite direction, which shrinks from earnest effort, and which is not true humility, but only, as we have said, pusillanimity and laziness and a subtle form of smug self-conceit. The aim of some must rather be to be ambitious enough, courageous enough, high-minded enough, to cherish a spirit of holy emulation, a humble audacity, a meek confidence in self with God as partner—*Omnia possum in Eo qui me confortat* (Philipp. iv. 13)—and a resolution such as the often quoted Father Balthassar Alvarez used to urge upon his novices "not to degenerate from the high thoughts of the sons of God".

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Yes, it is very stupid and vulgar to take occasion of pride out of what a sensible man, working in God's presence, finds it hard even to tolerate in himself. Are we not inclined to sympathize with that poor woman who overheard a preacher ejaculating piously, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to Thy name give glory," as he descended from the pulpit after a very indifferent sermon: "Indeed you may keep it all to yourself, and the Lord won't be a bit jealous".

I wonder does our Guardian Angel discount similarly, though in a less cynical spirit, our own estimate of several of our performances? One does not require to be an utter donkey to be greatly deceived about one's self. For instance, other people, I believe, are more struck by the fidelity with which the phonograph reproduces a man's voice and accent than the man himself is. I once had the honour of being photographed as one of a large wedding group. When the picture was subsequently presented for my inspection, I at once picked out the admirable likenesses of two of my religious brethren, but had great difficulty in recognizing a third priest in the corner, whom the sun evidently intended for myself. Even the most candid mirror does not let us see how we really look as we walk among men. The inspired Gauger prayed:—

> Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us,
> It wad fram many a blunder free us
> And foolish notion—

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and the Seraphic Saint proposed a higher and safer test of our true worth: "What we are in God's sight, *that* we are, and nothing more". If we insist on making an honest attempt to submit ourselves and all that we do to this supreme test, we shall not fail, with the help of God's grace, to practise true humility.

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THOUGHTS ON PAIN.

THERE have been many things written on the blessings of pain. "Pain," says a recent writer, "is a hideous fairy, repulsive yet benevolent. It is a protector and monitor, a companion whose good offices are not valued until he has departed. The traps and snares of life would remain hidden without pain. Imagine," he adds, "the consequences resulting from the absence of any pain—for instance, hunger, indigestion, fatigue, etc." Yes, both in the physical and in the moral order pain plays a very useful part. This thesis, however, is not to be proved here, except in as far as a proof of its spiritual efficacy may be implied in some of the testimonies which we now proceed to adduce from various quarters in favour of pain.

Even his most devoted disciples seldom go back to Father Faber's Anglican writings, and perhaps never to the poems of his youth. Of these "The Cherwell Water-lily" is the best known by name; but there is a much finer piece, liable to be confounded with it, "The Cherwell, a Descriptive Poem," which is to be found at page 467 of the second edition of "Poems by Frederick William

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Faber, D.D.". These are the concluding lines of the poem:—

> And better still if I could dare
> To pray the Saint's exclusive prayer,
> And with bold fervour ask of heaven
> More thorns and griefs than it hath given.
> So might I lie, in love with pain,
> And, like a miser with his gain,
> Handle the aching limb, to feel
> More palpably how pangs can heal
> Sin's wounds, and how beyond all price
> The sweetness of self-sacrifice,
> And what strange pleasures pain may bring
> As being a holy Christlike thing,
> And the repentant soul how still
> Beneath the weight of God's sweet Will.
> So might I lie, in saintly strait
> Whether to sue for death or wait
> That I might suffer more, and bear
> The Cross a little further, dare
> A little more to match the road
> Of Dolours which our Saviour trod.
> So might I lie, in peace how deep!
> So like an infant, fall asleep,
> While suffering cradled me to rest,
> Like Jesus at our Lady's breast.

In a note upon that "saintly strait, whether to sue for death or wait" to suffer more, the poet quotes St. Theresa's *pati aut mori* ["to suffer or else to die"] and the *patire e non morire* ["to suffer and not to die"] of St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi; and he tells us that the latter saint on her deathbed uttered these remarkable words: "Know that the exercise of suffering is a thing so much prized and so noble

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that the Word, finding himself in the bosom of His Eternal Father abounding greatly in the riches and delights of Paradise, but because He was not adorned with the stole of suffering, came upon earth for that adornment; and this was God who cannot be deceived"—and Who therefore must have been correct in His appreciation of the worth of suffering. Was this note added when a second edition of Father Faber's poems was issued in his Catholic days? The note concludes by suggesting that St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi in writing thus may have had in her mind a confused remembrance of a wonderful passage in the eleventh chapter of Tauler's Institutes.

Here is a quatrain by Aubrey de Vere :—

> We know that ofttime gain is loss :
> Believe, sad heart, that loss is gain.
> From golden ore to clear the dross—
> This is thy sacred function, Pain !

To "The Franciscan Annals" of January, 1894, our new Catholic poet, Francis Thompson, contributed a striking bit of prose, "Sanctity and Song". Here is an extract which bears directly on our subject.

"There is one lesson which strikes me as specially needed by the day in which we live—it is the lesson of Pain. Pain—the modern world pales before it. If a man's cupboard *has* such a skeleton, let us shut the cupboard very close, let us suppress all whisper of it : we will not have our actors play us tragedies,

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for they remind us of pain; unpleasant poverty—look to it, policeman, keep it from our ways when we walk forth, for it says 'Pain is'; take, messieurs the philanthropists, millions of money, so you will scavenge away this pain from our doors; and for ourselves, shall we not form a Mutual Cotton-wool Society, whereby every germ of pain shall be filtered from our sacred air? It is upon this cowardly day that the voice of St. Francis breaks, crying in the words of a modern poet—

Delight has taken Pain to her heart.

This sums St. Francis' teaching on this point, sums it in a line. Pain, which came to man as a penalty, remains with him as a consecration; his ignominy by a Divine ingenuity he is enabled to make his exaltation. Man, shrinking from laving pain, is a child shuddering on the verge of the water, and crying, 'It is so cold!' How many among us, after repeated lessonings of experience, are never able to comprehend that there is no special love without special pain. To such St. Francis reveals that the Supreme Love is itself full of Supreme Pain. It is fire, it is torture; his human weakness accuses himself of rashness in provoking it, even while his soul demands more pain, if it be necessary for more Love. So he revealed to one of his companions that the pain of his stigmata was agonizing, but was accompanied with a sweetness so intense as made it ecstatic to him. Such is the preaching of his words and example to an age which understands it not. Pain is. Pain is

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inevadible. Pain may be made the instrument of joy. It is the angel with the fiery sword, guarding the gates of the lost Eden. The flaming sword which pricked man forth from Paradise must wave him back; through that singeing portal, with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms, he must return or not at all."

"Inevadible," which there is no escaping. With this exception, the poet's prose is free from one of the faults found with his poetry. But we may advance this excuse for the occasionally strange and seemingly affected diction of his muse, that she had fresher and higher things to say than the following which is the present writer's "Low Views" about Pain.

Send me, O God! a little pain;
But lest that gift should come in vain,
Send with it copious grace to bear.
Coward, alas! I've shirked my share,
And life has been too like a home
And too unlike a martyrdom.

Can heaven be earned by days like these?
Rich prizes are not gained with ease.
In faith and love, with hope and fear,
I fain would strive and suffer here,
Keeping for heaven my whole reward—
But ah, Thou know'st me better, Lord!

This petted flesh and craven heart
Shrink from the hero's glorious smart.
I know the highest, holiest lot
Is happiest here; but *I* dare not
Covet such boon. I day by day
Must plod my slower, harder way.

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Toils, trials, troubles, light but long,
And in my heart a cheerful song—
Obedience to God's will made known
In loudest or in softest tone—
Each hour's small duties simply done:
Thus must my lowly crown be won.

Lord Morley speaks somewhere of "the great neglected truth that people nowadays want, not sermons but texts". It is often more useful to fix in the mind one wise saying than to try to follow a long train of reasoning, of which little or nothing is retained. Hence the utility of ejaculations, "winged words," *pensées*, "Great Thoughts," and the countless compilations of detached phrases, such as the three which Mrs. Sydney Lear has published under the titles of "Pearls," "Rubies," and "Diamonds". The twenty-seventh of her "pearls" is assigned to no author. "God's ear lies close upon our lips. It touches them. It is always listening. Thoughts speak to it as loudly as words; suffering even louder than words. His ear is never taken away. We sigh into it, even while we sleep and dream." Only one of these terse phrases is quite relevant, namely, that suffering speaks to God's ear more loudly than thoughts or words. How completely a little sickness seems to change all our relations with time and eternity! But acute suffering and especially chronic suffering of mind or body modifies marvellously our view of things. The Redeemer of the human race was Himself "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmity". The best rebuke to the new paganism that shrinks

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from all pain is St. Bernard's reproach to the effeminate Christian: "What a shame to be a delicate member under a thorn-crowned Head!" Yet many shrink from a conclusion which flows from the very essence of Christianity; and they feel impelled to utter some such prayer as old Fuller's:—

"Lord, when Thou shalt visit me with a sharp disease, I fear I shall be impatient, for I am cholerick by nature, and tender by my tempers, and have not been acquainted with sickness all my lifetime. I cannot expect any kind usage from that which hath been a stranger unto me. Teach me the art of patience whilst I am well, and give me the use of it when I am sick. In that day either lighten my burden or strengthen my back. Make me, who so often in my health have discovered my weakness presuming on my own strength, to be strong in sickness when I solely rely on Thy assistance."

The highest tribute ever paid to Pain is the ode which bears this name in Coventry Patmore's "Unknown Eros". High as it is, it ought not to be hard for those to follow its meaning who believe in the holiness of God, in sin, in Calvary, in Hell, in the merciful fires of Purgatory, and in the keen and perfect joy and sanctity and glory of Heaven.

O Pain! Love's mystery,
Close next of kin
To joy and heart's delight,
Low pleasure's opposite,
Choice food of sanctity
And medicine of sin.

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One of the things said by this panegyrist of Pain recalls a paragraph that went the rounds of the newspapers lately. It has often been mentioned that many years ago one of Mr. Gladstone's fingers was mangled so dreadfully by some accident that it was necessary to amputate it. The illustrious statesman said on some recent occasion that he remembered the feeling of ecstacy that ensued when the surgeons ceased to hack at the unfortunate finger—there were no anæsthetics in those days.

> Herein, O Pain, abides the praise
> From which my song I raise;
> But even the bastard good of intermittent ease
> How greatly doth it please!
> With what repose
> The being from its bright exertion glows
> When from thy strenuous storm the senses sweep
> Into a little harbour deep
> Of rest.

The convert poet continues to sing the praises of this angel in still higher strains; but the object for which these few pages have been put together will perhaps be better served by coming down to a lower level and ending with a prayer during pain:—

O my merciful and loving Jesus, who died for me on Calvary, give me the grace to suffer patiently this pain and every pain that You may send me between this moment and the last moment of my life. My prayer goes no farther, O my dear Redeemer and my Judge, for when the last pang of life, which we call

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death, is over, and when I shall be (through Your infinite mercy) not lost but saved—*then* I shall be sure to bear, not with patience only but with joy and gratitude, whatever purifying pain my poor soul may still require to make it pure enough for the painless and perfect happiness of heaven. Painless and perfect and happy *there* for ever; but *here* there must be pain, and if I bear my share of it well, O my loving Father, you will let it serve me as an easier and better purgatory than the purgatory which Your justice and mercy have prepared for me after death. I will try and bear the pains and troubles of this life with some little portion of the joy and love with which the holy souls bear their purgatory, and which make it, with all its bitterness, more like to heaven than to hell. Lord, send me here my purgatory, but give me grace to bear it.

When dear Father Augustus Law, of saintly and amiable memory, was exchanging the R.N. for the S.J., he came to the Novitiate at Hodder, and looking in to the chapel, he found (as he said) "all hands on their knees". A priedieu paper must not leave its readers in that pious posture: therefore I retract my purpose of ending with this prayer, and will in favour of the mild view of purgatory hinted at in some of the foregoing sentences cite two convert poets, an Englishman and an Irishman. One is Mr. Patmore again in this very ode to Pain, which, he says, helps us to learn

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Feeling how the pangful purging fire
Shall furiously burn
With joy, not only of assured desire,
But also present joy
Of seeing life's corruption, stain by stain,
Vanish in the clear heat of Love irate,
And, fume by fume, the sick alloy
Of luxury, sloth, and hate
Evaporate;
Leaving the man, so dark erewhile,
The mirror merely of God's smile.

The Irish convert poet is Aubrey de Vere. In his noble drama, "St. Thomas of Canterbury," the Empress calls to mind for her own comfort that there is a place "which fits us for that heaven where nought unclean can live, else were we hopeless"; and she asks Idonea "How think you of that heaven?"

Madam, thus:
That bourne is peace, since therein every will
Is wholly one with His, the Will Supreme;
Is gladness, since deliverance there is sure;
Is sanctity, since punishment alone
Of sin remains,—sin's least desire extinct—
And yet is pain not less.
'Tis pain love-born, and healed by love. On earth
Best Christian joy is joy in tribulation,
The noblest and the best. In that pure realm
Our tribulation also is the noblest:
'Tis pain of love that grieves to see not God.

It is hard to conceive how any sincere believer in God and eternity can dispense with the belief in this ante-chamber of heaven where the travel-stained wayfarer, safe at his journey's end, removes the last specks of dust that cling to his garments before being

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ushered into the Presence. This thought of purgatory also is a consolation for those who, looking back perhaps over a long life, are shocked at their dreadfully unchristian immunity from pain or sorrow of any kind. Well, it is hardly a compliment paid to them by God who Himself tells us that He chastises those whom He loves. But let even such take heart. Life is not over yet, and then there is death and the things that follow death.

But even in a seemingly painless and comfortable life there may be plenty of solid and salutary pain. This view of Christian mortification rendered invisible to the naked eye by being spread over all the surface of our lives puts me in mind of an incident that happened some seventy years ago. A sturdy Christian of tender years was making his frugal dinner with a very healthy appetite on a dish of stew. But the stew had been made on such economical principles and the meat element was so unobtrusive that our sturdy young Christian complained that it was all potatoes and that there was no meat to be seen: whereupon his mother consoled him with the assurance that the meat was boiled through it. We too at the spiritual banquet of our souls may perhaps desiderate stronger food, more suffering, larger lumps of mortification visible (like the contusions that a certain country doctor deposed to at a coroner's inquest), visible to the naked finger; but it may be more wholesome for us to have it "boiled through it," served up to us at every moment in homœopathic

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doses, spread over all the surface and saturating the whole substance of our daily lives. Are we accepting cheerfully whatever amount of discomfort, trouble, toil, and pain may be involved for us in the patient and persevering discharge of all our duties to Almighty God and to all His poor creatures round us?

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ON COMPUNCTION.

A MAN whose name would add some weight to the observation,[1] observed once in my hearing that he had been struck by a certain similarity between Cardinal Manning's preaching and Charles Stewart Parnell's public speaking—namely, in this that the preacher and the speaker never aimed at anything approaching to eloquence, but both of these remarkable, masterly, stern, and somewhat unamiable men had very great skill in choosing the very words that conveyed exactly the meaning they wanted to impress on their hearers, and nothing more. Several examples of this have struck me forcibly in Cardinal Manning's "Sin and Its Consequences," though the words that have led me to introduce them with this remark will hardly seem to be a case in point. Toward the end of his discourse on the Dereliction of the Cross, he says: "Whatever sorrows you have of the body, of the mind, or of the soul, these are intended to produce in you one thing above all—that is, compunction. Compunction means sorrow for sin, springing from the love of the Five Sacred Wounds

[1] The late Lord Russell of Killowen.

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which Jesus suffered in our behalf. Attrition, as you know, means the sorrow of the heart that is bruised; contrition, the sorrow of the heart that is broken; compunction, the sorrow of the heart that is pierced with Jesus Christ."

How do our hearts feel with regard to our sins and faults of all kinds? Certainly not heedless or indifferent, certainly not with any approach to impenitence, even in a greatly mitigated meaning of that dreadful word. Are our hearts *attriti*, touched, worn, bruised, affected to a certain extent externally, by a sorrow inspired by any supernatural motive less noble than the pure love of God for His own sake? Or are our hearts *contriti*, crushed together, broken, ground down, overwhelmed by that supreme and pure and perfect sorrow?

Compunction probably ought not to be contradistinguished from attrition and contrition as a third species of sorrow for sin, but ought rather to be described as a degree and quality of that sorrow, a certain keenness, piercingness, poignancy of contrition, especially when considered not as a passing act, but as an abiding disposition of the soul. We speak of an act of contrition, but of a spirit of compunction. Cardinal Manning, however, in the passage that I have quoted, wishes to make the etymology of the word point to one special proof of our Redeemer's love as the special motive of compunction. "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced," said the prophet long before; and compunction, says this

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great prelate, is "the sorrow of the heart that is pierced with Jesus Christ—sorrow for sin springing from the love of the Five Sacred Wounds that Jesus suffered for us". As if contrition (again) were the sorrow of the heart that is broken, attrition the sorrow of a heart that is bruised, compunction the sorrow of a heart that is pierced.

One can hardly begin to discuss the subject of compunction without calling to mind the famous saying of Thomas à Kempis in the middle of the first chapter of "The Imitation": "I had rather feel compunction than know its definition". And in fact when he comes in the twenty-first chapter of that same book, to treat of compunction of heart, he attempts no definition or exact description of it, but leaves us to conclude from his way of speaking of it that it is made up of the fear of God, self-restraint, the absence of foolish mirth, and of dissipation of mind, the habitual remembrance of our sins, and of the judgments of God, and of the fleetingness of all earthly objects. These are some of the things that he indicates as the sources in which we are to seek compunction of heart.

The word *compungimini* is found chiefly in two places in Holy Scripture, once in the Old Testament, and once in the New. In the fourth Psalm which priests read every day in the unchangeable Compline, the words occur: *Irascimini, et nolite peccare; quae dicitis in cordibus vestris in cubilibus vestris compungimini*—"Be ye angry and sin not: the things

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you say in your hearts be sorry for them upon your beds". But *in cubilibus vestris compungimini* is often translated in terms that suit our present subject better: "Have compunction in your chambers". Bellarmine explains the passage thus: When you feel your lower nature inclined to sin, get angry with it, boil up with a holy indignation against your misery and corruption, and by God's grace preserve yourself from sin. St. Basil says that anger in this sense was given to us to be *cos virtutis*, "the whetstone of virtue". The Psalmist, therefore, exhorts us here to excite ourselves to a holy indignation against our weakness and cowardice and guilt, and to weep over the faults and sins with which our own hearts will reproach us when we scrutinize the real state of our souls in the silence and solitude of our chambers. *Compungimini in cubilibus vestris:* "Have compunction in your chambers".

The other place where the word occurs is in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: after Peter had preached his first great sermon on Jesus Christ Crucified, St. Luke goes on to tell us: "Now when they had heard these things, they had compunction in their hearts, and they said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: 'What shall we do, men, brethren?'"

"What shall we do?" This very pertinent query of the first converts marks very emphatically the character of true compunction. It is practical and active, not any vague, passive sentimentality: no

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mere peevish, whining regret for folly, no snarling contempt for our weakness, no impudent pretended surprise that *we* (such as *we !*) could have sunk so low. Nothing of all this in true compunction, but a cheerful, humble acknowledgment that in spite of so many special graces we have grieved cruelly the Heart of Jesus, and that in spite of all our sins the Heart of Jesus has spared us, has had compassion on us and received us again into His grace; and then a deep sense of shame and sorrow for our sins and miseries along with an eagerness to show that we are in earnest by bearing something and doing something for the love of the Sacred Heart.

Compunction, therefore, is the spirit of the Prodigal resting peacefully by his father's fireside after the humiliation of the return, and the first rapture of gratitude from the generous reception have passed. It is a cheerful abiding sense of our sinfulness, a cheerful abiding sorrow for our sins. It by no means involves or tolerates discouragement or despondency. It is not contrition merely, but contrition with a larger infusion of faith, hope, and charity. It is the abiding sense of *forgiven* sin—of sin from which we feel ourselves to be now, by God's merciful grace, separated by an impassable gulf. Alas! we know that that gulf is not really impassable; but we can make it practically so for us by trying to live habitually in a spirit of compunction.

I remember hearing Father Daniel Jones, S.J., a very holy and enlightened man, say in a Retreat,

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that it is easier for us to pester ourselves and others about making general confessions over and over again, than to live habitually in a spirit of compunction. The repeating of general confessions is a definite outward act to which you can now and then screw up your courage, in order to console yourself with the notion that you are going through a sort of martyrdom to obtain purity of conscience; but more of real contrition, real humility, and real courage is required to try and live habitually according to the feelings that animated us after what we can fairly call our conversion, after some General Confession, which perhaps at some special crisis of our lives we made with special care and fervour, and after which the confessor bade us leave the past to God's mercy, and resolve to give ourselves thenceforth generously to the will of God.

The contrast between the policy of those self-willed, scrupulous, obstinate persons, who insist on scraping away at their souls by worrying self-examination and repeated confessions, and those others who try to cherish a spirit of cheerful compunction, seemed to me to be illustrated by what I noticed during a Retreat that I made in a country house about Christmas time. The snow lay thick upon the ground. The men had scraped laboriously a path through our lawn to the road. So it was for some days. One morning I opened the shutters. What had become of the snow? During the night the wind had changed, a thaw had set in, rain was falling—and not one snow-

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flake was left. How long would all the shovels and carts in the country have taken to scrape it up so completely and get it away! Sin is not pure and white like the snow. But what if the snow, instead of being so bright and pure as it is, were all a slush of wet, jet-black soot? That is the sort of snow that defiles our souls; and peevish, selfish, self-willed poking and scraping and examining will not purify our souls therefrom. Let the rain fall, let the sun shine, and the snow will disappear. The soft April showers of cheerful contrition with the sun shining through the clouds—the warmth of Divine charity, the spirit of compunction, will thaw the snow away, and the flowers and green leaves will presently come forth.

This illustration seems to leap from December to April; and indeed, April weather of the mild, old traditional sort, is a better symbol of the spiritual mood we are considering. The clouds may gather, the rain may fall, but the sun is still shining behind the clouds.

It is quite possible to stretch unduly the cautions of spiritual writers against expecting the feelings of our hearts to keep pace with the convictions of our minds, just as it is possible for many who are not entitled to it to take comfort for their dryness and distractions in prayer from the slighting things that are sometimes said about mere sensible devotion. But though there may be excellent prayer without any sensible devotion, it is very often our own fault

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that we have not more devotion, even of that sort; and it may be our own fault, also, that we do not habitually feel much more than we do of that vivid impression of the supremacy of God's claims, that profound sense of our own nothingness and miseries, and of the meanness of our treasons, which God gave to us at certain crises of our soul's progress, and which, considered as a normal mood of the soul, may be called the spirit of compunction. God has not changed meanwhile. His rights and His wrongs are the same as ever; and as deep and as keen as ever ought to be our grief and shame at the poor, unworthy part we have taken in the righting of His wrongs, even in our own souls.

We may take to ourselves those words with which Thomas à Kempis concludes his chapter *De Compunctione Cordis*: "Pray, therefore, humbly to the Lord, that He may give thee the spirit of compunction; and say with the prophet, 'Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me for drink tears in measure'". And we may adopt that prayer of the Church *Pro petitione lachrymarum*, which is found among the *Orationes ad diversa* in the Roman Missal.

"O almighty and most meek God, who broughtest forth out of the rock a fount of living water for Thy thirsty people, draw forth out of the hardness of our hearts tears of compunction, that we may bewail our sins, and by Thy compassion obtain forgiveness for them. Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

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THOUGHTS FOR THE NEW YEAR.

FAITH and reason, religion and philosophy, have many striking things to tell us about the flight of time as measured by the beautiful succession of minutes and hours and days and weeks and months and years. The largest manageable fragment of time is a year, and the beginning of a new year brings home to us more emphatically those solemn lessons that are suggested by the least serious consideration of life and time. "Sands make the mountains—minutes, years;" but we trample the sands under foot, uncounted and unobserved, while the mountain rises up before us, calm, immovable, and the eye must needs rest upon it constantly; we cannot ignore it. Nor can we ignore the passing of a year, however lightly we may heed the minutes that compose it.

And therefore it is that at this epoch of the year, when one year has just ended and another has just begun, even the most thoughtless find themselves constrained to put this question in some form or other to Him who alone can answer it: "Make known to me, O Lord, the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me" (Psalm XXXVIII. 5). This prayer of the Psalmist springs naturally to our lips whenever anything makes us realize how

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quickly life is passing away from us. So much of our term of life is gone already and the rest is following so swiftly that the question presses upon us: How much of it still remains? "Make known to me, O Lord, the number of my days." God will not do so; the number of our days and years He keeps a secret to Himself, and this secret is one of the most important provisions of God's providence in working out the sanctification of our souls. This secret adds a terrible emphasis to the often-repeated warning of our Redeemer, who will be our Judge: "Be ye always ready—watch and pray, for you know not the day nor the hour".

On New Year's Day we look back, and then look forward. We are like travellers climbing a mountain, who must at certain stages pause to take breath. Now, the first use the climbers are sure to make of such breathing-spaces is to turn their faces away from the heights above them and to gaze down at the place from which they started, the road by which they have come. Something like this we, too, have done in bringing the old year to a close; but such a retrospect, such a glancing backward, is chiefly useful as an incentive to make us form the resolution that St. Paul had formed before he said: "Forgetting the things that are behind, I stretch myself forward to the things that are before me". We, also, must now again face resolutely the heights above us, and, with renewed courage and energy, we must continue the toilsome ascent.

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For many of us, however, the remainder of life's journey can hardly be called an ascent. We not only speak of life as an uphill journey, but we speak of those who have reached a certain stage of that journey as going down the hill. Life is not a journey from sea-beach to mountain-top, but rather from shore to shore, across the steep and rugged and perilous isthmus which separates two oceans—the ocean of nothingness from which we have come, and the ocean of eternity towards which we are hastening, however reluctantly; hastening, not by voluntary effort of our own, but by the very gravitation of our mortality. Every step brings us nearer to the margin of that dark mysterious sea, which all must cross over, never to return. The waves of that ocean dashing on the rocks below—we may hear them more and more clearly at every step.

Yes; at every step. For here it is not as with those mountain-climbers we spoke of a moment ago. For us there is no pause. Whether we rest or toil, sleeping or waking, life goes on. The very moment in which we are speaking, even before we have finished the sentence, nay, the words upon our lips, is already gone, as irrevocably gone as the day of our First Communion, long ago.

These are mere truisms, but we sometimes require to be reminded that certain mere truisms, however plain and commonplace and tiresome, are after all true; and this is true, that even the longest life is made up of a limited number of moments of

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time, and that moment after moment, without the slightest break or pause between them, is passing away silently and swiftly, and with each moment passes away, used or unused, an opportunity of increasing our security of a happy eternity and of making that eternity happier.

Yes, happy and happier. For it is not merely a question of being lost or saved, though that ought to be enough "to make us work out our salvation with fear and trembling," in real earnest, without a day's break or an hour's delay. But over and above the final saving of our souls, every hour of the year that is just over, every hour of all the past years of our lives, which was not employed in God's grace and according to God's will, is a loss to be deplored, a loss, to a certain extent, irreparable. Yes, every hour once lost is, in a certain true sense, lost utterly and for ever. That individual hour can never be made up for, can never be employed for the purposes for which God gave it to us. Some other hour, indeed, may try to atone for it; but that other hour has its own work to do, its own merits to gain, without seeking to supply for other portions of God's gift. Heroic penance, it is true, can leave languid innocence behind in the race for sanctity; but with poor sinners like us, with such penance as *we* are likely to perform, has not each day of our lives quite enough to do to atone for itself? Why should we allow our daily debt to God to fall into such terrible arrears?

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Let us then strive to begin the New Year not only with a pure conscience and a fervent and humble determination to save our souls at any cost, but with an earnest wish and a firm purpose to spend each month and week and day, as it passes, in such a manner that we shall be able to look back upon them, not with remorse but with joy and gratitude, from that future day (God knows how far in front of us it lies), that day of death which shall be for us the New Year's Day of eternity. Fancy that you have reached that day or the eve of that day—fancy that you are lying on your deathbed, and looking back on your past life from your deathbed, and try now to realize what shall be your feelings and desires *then:* then, when we shall know better how perfectly God deserves to be loved, how faithfully and fervently He merits to be served, and how generously He will reward through the endless day of eternity each separate additional moment of this fleeting time that is spent in His service.

In this effort to read the present in the light of the future we may be helped by a little apologue of Jean Paul Richter—the same idea indeed which was developed into a delightful Christmas Tale in our own language and made many laugh and some almost weep some sixty Christmases ago, and often since.[1] The New Year's Night of a Miserable Man (as the

[1] Charles Dickens's "Christmas Carol," the first and far the best of his four Christmas books. It has just been translated into Irish by the Rev. Patrick Dinneen.

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German writer calls his phantasy) supposes a certain man, miserable indeed and old, friendless and desolate, to be forced by the epoch of the year which has suggested to us a similar train of thought to look back on the life which he felt was for him coming to an end. He looks back, and he sees nothing there but a dreary blank and worse than a blank: folly and sin and crime—opportunities lost, graces abused, inspirations stifled, the promise of youth blighted—all lost utterly and for ever. And he cries out in the bitterness of his soul: "Oh, that I could live my life over again! Oh, that my youth could return!"

And lo! his youth returned. He was young again. His life was still before him. It was all a dream of what might have been, of what might still be, if he did not now at once shake off his sloth and curb his passions and live for God and eternity. Let us also dream this dream and awake from it to a like resolve.

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THOUGHTS FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

"GREATER love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). This was said by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the very eve of His Passion, the night before that day on which He was Himself to disprove His own assertion, to go beyond what He fixes here as the uttermost limit of love, to show that there *is* a greater love than the love that would make a man die for his friends, since He the Man-God died for His enemies.

He died. He, the Author of Life, yielded to death. How could He die? An American convert, Father Tabb, has ventured to imagine that our Divine Redeemer at the very beginning of His public ministry, before working His first miracle in deference to our Blessed Lady's wishes, although His hour was not yet come—this poet-priest imagines the Son addressing the Mother thus:—

> "What, woman, is My debt to thee,
> That I should not deny
> The boon thou dost demand of Me?"—

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And he dares to make the Blessed Virgin answer:—

"I gave Thee power to die".

Yes, power to die. God needed that power, and He had it not. He needed it, for it was ordained in the eternal counsels that fallen man should be redeemed by sacrifice. The outraged majesty of God required an infinite atonement, and the appointed means of atonement was suffering. Now, God could not suffer, and man was incapable of infinite suffering. Therefore God assumed our human nature, that so His Humanity might suffer, and His Divinity might lend to that suffering infinite atoning worth. The Son of God became the Son of Mary. She "gave Him power to die".

That awful, mysterious power of dying was exercised on our behalf by our Divine Redeemer on the first Good Friday of all.

Good Friday. The Church in one of her Catechisms asks her little children: "Why do you call that day good on which Christ suffered so painful and ignominious a death?" And she teaches them to reply: "Because on that day, by dying on the Cross, Christ showed the excess of His love, and purchased every blessing for us".

Yes, the excess of His love—the extravagance, the utter prodigality of His love. When, a little while before, Jesus had wept over the grave of Lazarus, those who were standing by whispered to one another, "See how He loved him!" For us

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He shed, not tears only, but all His blood, and the angels may well have cried in amazement: "See how He loves them!" "I would give my heart's blood for you" is the extreme hyperbole of love, the most enthusiastic expression of human affection; and, when apparently earnest and sincere, it is accepted as a proof of love, though it can never go beyond mere words. But with the Divine Lover of Souls, Christ Jesus, our Saviour, it went beyond words—He fulfilled this word exactly to the very letter, pouring out for us the last drop of His Heart's blood when the spear of the Roman centurion pierced His sacred side as He hung dead upon the Cross.

That, however, was at the very end or beyond the end; and we are only at the beginning now. Yet no—the beginning was long before. Jesus did not wait for Calvary to shed His blood for us; nor was His Passion confined to the close of His life. Passion means suffering; and the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows were by no means reserved for His last hours or His last days, but were spread over all the years that He spent on earth. He came on earth to suffer, and He lost no time before "being about His Father's business". That business, that work, was to atone for the sins of men. Therefore, from the first He lived a life of poverty and hardship, and at the last He died a death of torture and shame.

It is only the death of our Lord, or, at least, it is only the closing scenes of His life, that we commemorate to-day; but while we recall a few of the

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harrowing incidents of those scenes, let us bear in mind that this is nothing more than the consistent ending of a lifetime of pain and sacrifice. For three-and-thirty years Jesus had lived and suffered—suffering most, perhaps, when He seemed not to suffer at all; for, as He Himself lets us know towards the end, He had a baptism wherewith He desired to be baptised, and oh! how He was straitened until it should be accomplished! That is His own exclamation, betraying the pressure and stress of His love and longing. *Quomodo coarctor!* (Luke XII. 50).

And now at last His lifelong baptism of desire is to become in very deed a baptism of blood.[1] "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (Luke XXII. 15). Ah, there He betrays the reason why He has longed so eagerly for this paschal feast; it is because immediately after it He is to suffer and to die for our sake.

His hour was come. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end;" and so at the end came the Last Supper and the First Communion—for He had reserved for this solemn, pathetic hour the institution of that abiding prodigy of His love which yesterday, even under the shadow of the Cross, made the Church's heart to beat fast with love and

[1] Baptismus fluminis, flaminis, sanguinis is a phrase indicating the three ways of entering the Church of Christ—by actual baptism, or by a great desire of this Sacrament when it cannot be obtained before death, or by shedding one's blood for the Christian faith before having been received into the Christian Church.

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joy and gratitude, but which to-day she hides from our sight, as if she almost wishes us to forget it, lest, remembering it, we should be unable to feel keenly enough the bitterness of the parting that has bequeathed to us such a parting gift.

And then, having spoken many farewell words, the tenderest and most beautiful that ever fell even from His lips—words which (thank God!) St. John, the Apostle of Love, was inspired to record for us in full—Jesus turned from that first altar, that first Communion-table of the Church, and made His way to the Mount of Olives with the eleven Apostles round Him. Only eleven—one of the twelve was missing. Where was *he?* Judas had slunk away from the supper-room to make his last arrangements with his Master's enemies for His arrest. He knows where to find Him. Jesus does not hide from him; He goes to His accustomed place of prayer, the Garden of Gethsemane, and we are expressly told that Judas knew it well. Eight of the Apostles are left at the entrance to the Garden, and Jesus honours three by asking them to bear Him closer company—St. Peter, of course, first always, and then the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and with St. John, his brother. These had been the witnesses of His transfiguration of glory and ecstasy on Mount Thabor, and now they are the witnesses of His transfiguration of grief and pain. "Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray." He moves away from the three a stone's throw, and falls on His face in prayer. We are

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allowed to overhear part of His prayer. "Father, if it be possible, let this Chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He was true man, with a human will and a human heart; and in body and soul, from the very perfection of both, He was peculiarly sensitive to physical pain and mental anguish; and during His Passion He willed to suffer to the utmost in each, without any relief from the Divine Nature, which was only allowed, as it were, to enable His human nature to endure what it would otherwise have sunk under, overwhelmed. "And being in an agony, He prayed the longer" (Luke XXII. 43). Three words which the Evangelists use to describe this agony may be linked with three special sources of His anguish. They tell us that Jesus began to fear, to be sorrowful, to be weary. *Et Jesus coepit pavere, moestus esse, taedere.* "He began to fear;" and this fear we may attribute to His apprehension of all the bodily torments of which He was about to be the victim. Brave soldiers have confessed that on the eve of battle their nerves were unstrung, they felt depressed and fearful, whilst in the heat of the conflict itself they felt nothing but ardour and courage. So may it have been for Jesus Christ, knowing, as He did, beforehand all the torments of His Passion on the morrow.

Not alone, what He has to suffer in His own natural body, but still more He felt all that the members of His mystical body were ever to endure

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for His sake. The generous heart feels more what others suffer for it than what it suffers itself; and thus during His time of suffering Jesus suffered in His Heart all that was ever to be suffered by all the martyrs, known and unknown, of all the ages, not alone those who shed their blood for the Christian faith in the persecutions of Pagan Rome, or in more modern times in China or Japan or nearer home—not alone those of whom there is record in the calendar of the Church or in printed books, but all who were in public or in private to suffer pain or poverty or privation in union with our Lord Jesus Christ, in His grace and for His sake.

Again, the Evangelists tell us that Jesus began to be sorrowful—with sorrow for the sins of men—sins of every kind, in every place, in every time, all clear before His mind as a single sin might be when committed under His very eyes, like St. Peter's denial in an hour or two—our own sins among the rest, even our most secret sins of thought, all plain before the mind of Jesus then, separately and individually. Now the sight of these sins was to the Incarnate God of Sanctity worse than a million deaths. As only He of all men has ever fully known the rights of God, so only He of all men has ever fully known the wrongs of God; and, therefore, He alone can fully understand the sinfulness of even the least sinful sin. All the contrition of all the innocent saints of God, and of all the penitent saints together—Magdalen and Agnes, Augustine and Stanislaus, and

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all the rest—all the sorrow that human hearts have ever felt for their own sins and the sins of all the world was as nothing to the hatred and sorrow for sin that overwhelmed the heart of Jesus that night in His prayer of agony. And these sins were pressing upon Him, close to Him, weighing Him down, for He had taken upon Himself the iniquities of us all.

And then for so many in vain. Was this the cause of His weariness? *Coepit taedere.* "He began to be weary." This was the third and worst source of the bitterest anguish of the heart of Jesus—that so many of His wretched creatures would refuse to be saved. *Tantus labor non sit cassus!* "Let not toil so great be wasted." Yet such is the awful power of the human will that upon the unrepentant sinner the sacrifice of Jesus is alas! wasted. For such He will have died in vain. This was the bitterest ingredient of the Chalice, concerning which He prays again the self-same prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this Chalice pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt". But it was His Heavenly Father's will that the Chalice should not pass, that He should drain it to the dregs. This was, indeed, the Passion of the Heart of Jesus. Did that Heart break under its load of anguish? And was it this that stayed the living current in His veins, driving the blood out through the pores, drenching His garments till the heavy drops ran down upon the olive roots? Certainly, that agony would have been the death agony of our Redeemer if His Divinity had

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not sustained Him, unwilling as He was to die as yet. He would even thus have died for man; but such a death could not content His love. He would do more than save us: one red drop from His veins, one tear from His eyes, one sigh from His Heart, one single expiatory act, infinite because His, would have been enough for that. But He would die for our love. And He would do more than merely die for us. He would, for love of us, be butchered—is it too dreadful a word? Think of the blows and buffets, think of the scourges, think of the thorns, think of the nails! He would for our sake be slaughtered, murdered, massacred!

Already the murderers are close upon Him. "Arise, let us go hence; he who is to betray Me is at hand." He did not say, "The traitor is coming, let us flee". He does not even wait for him; He goes to meet him, for He was offered because He Himself willed it—*oblatus est quia ipse voluit*—and not Judas, but His own love for us betrayed Him into the hands of His enemies.

Here may be said to begin the mysteries of the Passion, unless we take the first of them to be that agony of prayer by which Jesus prepared for the conflict. Each of these pathetic scenes and incidents, which are indeed mysteries—mysteries of the Divine condescension, humiliation, and love—might well occupy our hearts and minds for years, as they have done for many a saint and holy soul. What lessons each incident contains for us when we

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remember who it is that is suffering all this, and for whom He is suffering it! The treacherous kiss of Judas; the flight of the Apostles; St. Peter's three denials, so quickly repented of and atoned for so generously; the mock trial, with our Lord's bitterest foes as His self-appointed judges; the long hours of that night during which our Lord was in the hands of the servants of the High Priest, who made Him the butt of their cruel sport, treating Him as an impostor, blindfolding Him, and striking Him, and then defying the pretended prophet to tell who had struck Him. And then, when the morning of Good Friday is sufficiently advanced, the priests and Pharisees drag their captive to the court of Pontius Pilate. But let us dwell a little on the three cowardly devices that Pilate resorted to in his desire to escape the guilt of condemning one whom he felt to be innocent.

Hearing Galilee mentioned, he first grasps at this excuse for sending the accused to Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee, who happened to be then in Jerusalem—Herod, denounced even in profane history as a cruel, sensual tyrant. Jesus will not gratify his impious curiosity, but "mute as a lamb before its shearer" (as Isaiah had described Him three hundred years ago) "He opens not His mouth". Whereupon Herod and his courtiers treat Him as a simpleton, and, clothed by them in the white garment of a fool, He is dragged back to Pilate through the streets of His own Jerusalem in the midst of a jeering mob.

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Then Pilate remembers that these Jews claim the right at this season of demanding the release of a prisoner out of the jail, in memory of the release of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt. He determines to put in competition with Jesus the vilest criminal then in jail, a robber and a murderer called Barabbas, so that the choice of the people must needs fall on Jesus. "Which shall I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?" We are expressly told that the chief priests and the ancients went about among the people to persuade them to cry out for Barabbas.

Foiled again, Pilate's third expedient for escaping the odium of an unjust condemnation is to inflict upon this calm, silent, mysterious Man so terrible a scourging that even the hearts of His enemies will be moved to compassion, and they will cry out: "We are satisfied. Spare Him! Hold, it is enough." What was too horrible for our Divine Lord to suffer is not too horrible for us to contemplate with adoring awe; yet we shrink from picturing to ourselves, or at least from putting into words, the realities of that dreadful scene, the scourging of our Lord at the pillar. About forty years ago a law was passed in the British Parliament, adding flogging to imprisonment as a punishment for garotting and some other dastardly crimes. The newspapers gave minute descriptions of the first application of this law. One of these accounts I have preserved ever since, in order to keep vivid before my mind

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this conclusion: if the effects of twenty-five lashes, administered as a matter of business and duty by a prison warder nowadays in civilized England, in the presence of sheriff and sub-sheriff and surgeon and representatives of the public Press, can yet be so fearful, so horrible that one dares not describe it —what must have been the condition to which Jesus was reduced by the scourging inflicted on Him by a whole cohort of brutal heathen soldiers, so cruel that at the end of it they had the fiendish barbarity to clothe their meek Victim with a mock purple of royalty, and to crown Him with thorns, driving the points deep into His head and round His temples, where the mere pricking of a pin would cause the keenest agony! What must He have been, to what a pitiable state He must have been reduced, when, after all this, Pilate exhibited Him to the people, *Ecce Homo.* "Behold the Man!" Yes, it was necessary to tell that this is He—so changed! No longer like a man, a bruised and mangled worm, an outcast of the people. And still they cast Him off. "Away with Him, crucify Him," is the answer of the populace, hounded on by the proud, jealous scribes and Pharisees and by the demons of hell who feel that this is the central crisis in the world's history and that their empire over the souls of men is at stake. Still the merciless cry rings out: "Crucify Him, away with Him, away with Him!"

Jesus is condemned to death. This is the first of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Whenever we

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begin the Stations, it is very well to remind ourselves how far we are from the beginning, how much Jesus has gone through already. It would be an excellent Good Friday resolution if we were to determine this moment to make the Stations as often as we can. Many of us could do so every Friday in memory of the first Good Friday. This is a most solid, most Christian devotion, easy to follow, and by the succession of pictures and changes of posture providing against monotony, weariness, and distractions. No sincere, enlightened Christian could possibly object to the Stations of the Cross if he really understood the devotion and how we practise it. Was not she a true and enlightened Christian, the poor old woman who said to me many years ago these precise words: "I'm not able to read, your Reverence, but when I look up at the Stations, and think what my sweet Lord suffered, my heart does be breakin', and I'm ready to be lifted in a faint, to think He done all that for *me!*" How close this poor woman came to the words of St. Paul: "Christ hath loved me, and delivered Himself for me!" Again, it is *for me, for me.* Each of us has a right to say the same: Jesus died for love of me, individually and by name, with as direct and personal a love as if there were no other sinner but only my poor self to die for.

To encourage us to make the Stations of the Cross frequently, the Church has attached to this stay-at-home pilgrimage all the indulgences that she has ever granted to those who visit the Holy Places

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themselves; and these, we may be sure, are exceedingly numerous and generous, when we remember the dangers and toils that were involved formerly in such a pilgrimage. The Raccolta, the authorized collection of Indulgenced Prayers and Devotions, tells us that preachers are forbidden to count up the indulgences of the Stations, to specify them in particular. Our attitude towards them may resemble that of a certain poor simpleton who during a Jubilee Year was overheard in a country chapel putting forward his claim for the Jubilee indulgence in these vague but no doubt efficacious terms: "Lord, give me my share of anything that's goin'".

The fourteen Stations of the Cross and the Seven Words upon the Cross are the easiest and most fruitful heads of meditation. God grant that they may be always blessedly familiar to us. When on the first Good Friday the last of those Seven Words was spoken, when at length the Heart of Jesus ceased to beat, when the Lord of Life had expired—the rocks were cloven asunder, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the floor to the roof, the graves opened and gave up their dead, the earth quaked, the sun—obeying that Voice which had once said, "Be there light," and which now said, "Be there darkness"—refused to shine upon the impious deicidal world. All Nature put on mourning for the death of the Eternal. Hell itself reeled at the shock, and the demons raged with a darker despair. In Limbo the holy captives who had pined so long in patient

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bondage felt the shock too, but for them it was a thrill of rapture, for they knew that the hour of their deliverance was come. Nay, one might deem that in Heaven itself around the throne of the Most High, the angelic psalms were hushed for a time, soon to swell out into a new ecstasy more heavenly than before, upon the great day when the everlasting gates should be uplifted to let the King of Glory enter, whilst the mingled choirs of men and angels, the redeemed and the unfallen, should raise the song of triumph: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive glory, and benediction, and power". Thus were Earth, Hell, Heaven, astounded at the closing marvels of man's redemption, while man himself, proud, sinful man, the guilty cause and object of all, passed on, unconcerned, with head erect.

So is it still, alas! with too many of God's wretched, sinful creatures; but (thank God!) it is not so, it cannot be so, it must not be so, with us. The love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus must not be lost upon us; we will give Him in return the full love and service of our hearts. We yield ourselves up for ever, loving captives of the Cross.

When the degenerate kinsman of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great—when the apostate Julian was struck down by the hand of God and by the arrow of the Persian and lay dying on the plain of Marenga—it is said that he filled the hollow of his hand with the life-blood that welled up from his bad heart, and, dashing it madly upward against

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the sky, he uttered this death shriek of despair and rage: "Jesus of Galilee, Thou hast conquered!" May a like cry with a different meaning be wrenched from our hearts, as we kneel in spirit at the foot of the Tree which not our own blood, but the life-blood of another Heart has purpled. Be ours the cry, not of despair, but of hope, and faith, and grief, and love: "O Jesus of Calvary, Thou hast conquered. Yes, dear Lord, Thou hast conquered. Thou hast conquered even this hard heart of mine."

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THOUGHTS FOR ASCENSION THURSDAY.

"THOU hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive."[1] It was with these prophetic words that the Royal Psalmist, a thousand years before the event occurred, described as if it were already past the joyful mystery which is commemorated at this season year after year. This is the manner in which the earthly career of our Divine Redeemer came to an end amid the pomp and magnificence of the Ascension.

It began very differently. He who now ascended had first to descend. The Most High became the most lowly. From the depths of His unbeginning eternity, seeing the ruin of His human creatures who were to be, the Son of God said to His Eternal Father: "Behold, I come!" And in the fulness of time He came; but He came in secret, and only His Mother knew. When, however, the hour was come for the Good Shepherd to lay down His life for His flock, when it was expedient for us that He who was the Way should go and that He who was the Life should die, His death of shame, or what was meant

[1] PS. LXVII. 19.

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to be the shame of His death, took place not in secret but on the summit of Calvary, at noonday, in the sight of all.

Some such contrast as that which thus distinguished the beginning and the ending of the mortal life of our Saviour prevails also between the beginning and the ending of His immortal life, so far as it was still confined to this earth. The three days during which His sacred body was to remain under the empire of Death—which He had conquered for ever by yielding to it for a little time—were shortened to the very utmost that was consistent with prophecy and the Divine decree; and very early in the morning of the third day, in the solitude and silence and secrecy of the Easter dawn, the new birth takes place which is never to lead on to death, and in which our Redeemer raises Himself glorious and immortal from the dead. "Jesus, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall not any more have dominion over Him."[1]

Yet He does not quit at once this valley of death. He seems reluctant to leave this earth, though it had given Him nothing better than a manger for His cradle and nothing better than a gibbet for His deathbed. He lingers on for another forty days in the desert; forty days of glorified life on earth after the forty hours' sleep in the grave; forty days and forty hours, in order, says one of the ancient Fathers of the Church, that we may comprehend how much

[1] Rom. vi. 9.

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more lavish God is of His consolations than of His afflictions, since the pains were measured by hours and the joys by days. Very inadequate indeed is this quaint old conceit, and very unjust to the infinite prodigality of God's bounty as a Rewarder. Not as hours are to days, but as one hour, one moment, is to eternity. "For our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us," says St. Paul, "above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."[1] The compensation for Calvary was not the forty days before the Ascension, but the glorious eternity after it. Our labour is momentary, our reward is everlasting.

During those forty days the arisen Saviour showed Himself from time to time to those who were appointed to bear witness to the reality of His resurrection; He gave His last instructions to the Apostles and tried to wean them gradually from the too human tenderness of their attachment to His corporal presence. For now at last it was indeed "expedient for them that He should go," as He had said in His farewell discourse at the Last Supper; for, if He tarried longer, earth would be changed into something quite different from what it was meant to be. This world was meant to serve as a place of penance, purification, faith and hope, prayer and patience. There would be no longer room for the exercise of these virtues if God were to abide visibly among us in all the omnipotence of His goodness and His glory.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

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He must leave us, He must hide Himself, He must withdraw. It is expedient for us that He go.

His departure takes place, as we have said, not in secret, like the Resurrection, but in the sight of almost all who then believed in Him. He bids them meet Him on Mount Olivet; and there, at the appointed hour, He shows Himself in the midst of them, more glorious than He had been in the mystery of the Transfiguration on that same Mount of Olives. But the generous, impulsive heart of St. Peter does not now break out into the cry of rapture, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" He has learned much since then. Perhaps he is weeping as he has wept so often since Jesus looked at him after his denial; for now those eyes are looking at him for the last time. We may dare to imagine that Jesus goes from group to group with tender farewell words such as He had spoken by anticipation at the Last Supper; His heart, if not His lips, offering up that most loving prayer for us to His Heavenly Father which St. John was—thank God!—inspired to preserve for us in full in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel.

And so, blessing His beloved ones for the last time on earth, His arms stretched out in benediction as they had been stretched out on the hard wood of the cross, His hands still bearing the marks of the nails, not as unsightly scars but radiant and beautiful, pathetic memorials of all that He had suffered for our love,—He ascends, not in a fiery chariot like the prophet Elias of old, nor carried by an angel like the

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prophet Habacuc, nor as His Blessed Mother will in a few years "come up out of the desert leaning on her Beloved," borne upward by her Son's almighty arms,—not thus, but by His own Divine power Jesus raises Himself up from this sinful earth which He has redeemed from its sins, and ascends to the bosom of the Father.

"Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive." The fallen earth which had lain captive to sin and hell He has ransomed with His blood; and those who were in prison He has released; and now He bears them, willing and joyful captives, in His train as He returns in triumph to heaven. Higher and higher the glorious pageant mounts above the olive-trees, till a bright cloud hides it from the sight of those who are gazing from below, while the angelic hosts that come to meet their King burst forth into the canticle of exultant welcome: "Lift up your gates, ye princes; and, O ye eternal gates, be ye lifted up, and the King of Glory will enter in!"[1] And then, choir answering to choir, they ask: "Who is the King of Glory?" And they themselves make answer: "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle"—in that supreme combat, namely, in which He has been just engaged for the souls of His human race and in which He has prevailed; and now He ascends on high, leading captivity captive.

This glorious mystery of the Ascension has this peculiarity, that it is the first solemn inauguration of

[1] Psalms xxiii. 7.

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the present order of things; it is the beginning of things as they are. When we try to meditate on the Passion, we must suppose the past to return again; for all that is in reality over and gone—"Jesus, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more". In such meditations there is a certain degree of unreality, and there is need of a larger exercise of the dramatic power of faith which makes the dead past to live again. But it ought to be easier for us to enter into the joy of the Ascension; for this is what the Heart of Jesus now feels and will feel for ever: the glory and rapture which then began for Him go on now and will go on for ever. And surely, since this is so, He may well address to us that loving reproach: "If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad".[1]

The devout Christian who with a vivid faith enters into the spirit of the Church in her yearly cycle of festivals might well feel at this time—when the Ascension ends the series of the personal feasts of our Blessed Lord—might indeed feel like that pious pilgrim of whom St. Francis de Sales writes in his own winning way, with many simple and picturesque details, in his famous treatise on the Love of God. Abandoning his home and his worldly interests, this Christian knight, at great cost and with grievous hardships and perils, made his pilgrimage to the holy places. He visited all the scenes of our Lord's life—Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the places where Jesus had preached and wrought His miracles; and

[1] St. John xiv. 28.

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he tried to recall with love and gratitude all that Jesus had felt and done in those holy spots. Then he went lovingly through the stages of the Passion—the tomb where Christ's body lay and whence He rose again; the spot where He appeared to Mary Magdalen, and all the rest,—till at last he reached Mount Olivet. There he knelt down and kissed the prints of our Lord's feet on the rock from which He ascended, and then he prayed: "Lord, I have followed Thee thus far; do not keep me back: let me follow Thee still". And Jesus took pity on the simplicity of his faith and the intensity of his fervour, and called him to Himself. The pilgrim swooned away in a happy death of love on the Mount of the Ascension, and followed his Divine Master on to heaven.

We cannot follow our Lord thus: we can follow Him only in spirit and desire into that heaven where He has gone to prepare a place for us. The Ascension is the beginning of heaven, according to our conception of heaven; for our last glimpse of our ascending Lord is our first glimpse of His heaven—heaven as it is for Him and for us. Our heaven is not the heaven of God's unbeginning eternity, the heaven of God's infinitely happy, all-sufficing solitude before the first angelic hymn broke the stillness round the throne, when God, the Three in One, alone was; nor is it even the heaven of God and His angels. But our heaven is the heaven in which God shares His blessedness not only with His angels

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but with His poor human creatures owning bodies and hearts like ours; and this heaven began on the first Feast of the Ascension, when (as the priest, during the octave of the feast, says at Mass just before the Consecration) "the only-begotten Son of God placed the frailty of our substance, united to Himself, at the right hand of the glory of the Father".

Now at length man can enter the presence of God. In His sacred humanity Jesus ascended to heaven to be the first-born of many brethren. *We* must be of them. Where He is, we also must be. To reach where Christ has gone, we too must ascend. To ascend requires an effort. The most hackneyed of all classical quotations tells us that it is easy to descend the downward slope, but that to mount upward to higher and purer air is a work of toil. We must ascend, however much the gravitation of our corrupt nature may tend to drag us down. We must, according to the consecrated phrase of the Royal Psalmist, "dispose ascensions in our hearts". Our hearts must ascend: we must aspire. We must never faint or lag, but must face courageously the steep ascent.

> How high we know not, but the way we know,
> And how, by mounting ever, we attain—
> And so climb on!

As the angels clothed in white said to the men of Galilee who were still gazing wistfully upward from Mount Olivet, Jesus who ascended to-day will come

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again to judge us. He will have judged us long before; and even as we have contrasted Incarnation and Crucifixion, and again Resurrection and Ascension, so might we contrast the beginning and the ending of that intermediate period of our existence after death—the secrecy and solitude of the particular judgment and the world-wide publicity of that general judgment which St. Paul calls "the day of the manifestation of the just judgment of God".

On that final Feast of the Ascension, when He who ascended into heaven shall descend again to judge those whom He redeemed, and almost on the spot where He redeemed them, and when, having fulfilled His office of Judge as well as of Saviour, He shall ascend again to heaven, and the eternal gates shall open once more to let the King of Glory enter and shall then close behind Him for ever, may we all be with Him there, *within* the gates—not without but within—among His blessed captives, the trophies of His sacred Passion, when for the last time He shall fulfil the prophecy of the Royal Psalmist: "Thou hast ascended on high; Thou hast led captivity captive".

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THOUGHTS FOR WHITSUNTIDE.

I FEAR that there are very few of us to whom it ought not to be an occasion of surprise and regret when we are reminded how seldom we think, how far we are from thinking habitually, of God the Holy Ghost. We are all too prone to be forgetful of God; but the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is even more rarely in our thoughts than the Second Person or the First. This week at least must remind us, in spite of ourselves.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity has assumed our human nature and made Himself visible; and during His mortal life He was, and still through His Eucharistic life He is, our Emmanuel—"God with us". Thus He has made it impossible for the children of His Church to forget Him; we must needs think of Him whenever we look upon the crucifix or kneel before the altar. "Do this in remembrance of Me."[1]

Again, our Lord's constant reference to His Father and our Father—nay, the very name of Father—makes us think naturally of the First Per-

[1] St. Luke xxii. 19.

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son of the Blessed Trinity when our thoughts turn to the Deity, to the Supreme Being in whom we live and move and are; although the Catechism tells us that, in thus saying "Our Father," we address, not the First Person of the Blessed Trinity apart from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but Almighty God who is the common Father of all. There is a certain prominence, a priority of order, assigned to God the Father which is expressed by the theological phrase, *Pater supponit pro Trinitate.* All the outward operations indeed of the Godhead are from all the Three Divine Persons in common; but creation is assigned by appropriation to God the Father, redemption to God the Son, and sanctification to God the Holy Ghost. Now, creation and redemption come in a certain way under our senses, while sanctification is a work altogether spiritual and invisible. The Third Divine Person has never assumed a permanent visible form like the Incarnate Word; nor is His name on our lips like the name of Father; though it is only through Him that we can cry, *Abba, Pater;*[1] and St. Paul tells us that we cannot say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Ghost.

Thus it has come to pass that practically it is with many Christians almost as it was with the first disciples whom St. Paul found at Ephesus,[2] and who said in answer to his question: "We have not so much as heard if there be a Holy Ghost". And indeed it was not to the early Christian neophytes,

[1] Rom. VIII. 15. [2] Acts XIX. 2.

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but to Christians of our own day or of a recent day, that a certain French bishop referred when, having written a book about the Holy Ghost, he placed as a motto on the title-page that inscription which St. Paul noticed on a pagan altar at Athens: *Ignoto Deo* —"To the Unknown God".

This is no doubt an exaggerated way of rebuking our habitual forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit,—an exaggeration which surprises us less when we recollect that this Bishop of Nevers was the Abbé Gaume, author of "Le Ver Rongeur," which inaugurated in France, some fifty or sixty years ago, a too violent controversy concerning the so-called paganism in education—an attack on the study of the Greek and Roman classics in schools. An exaggeration it certainly was; for no one who uses the ordinary devotions of the Church can be so utterly neglectful with regard to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. For instance, we cannot bless ourselves with the Sign of the Cross without expressing our faith in Him as equal to the Father and to the Son; and every decade of the Rosary, every psalm of the Divine Office, ends by giving glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

The *Gloria Patri*, etc., to which I have just alluded as winding up each of the psalms when repeated in the Offices of the Church, is familiar to most of the faithful. But there is one act of special devotion to the Holy Ghost which is performed only by those

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who have the obligation of saying the Divine Office —namely, the hymn of the Holy Ghost, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which during these days of Whitsuntide is substituted for the ordinary hymn of Tierce. Nay, many who have said the Divine Office for years may have failed to notice that this change is not quite so arbitrary as it seems at first; for it is only the substitution of one hymn of the Holy Ghost for another.

One of the reminders of the Trinity that meet us everywhere is the assigning of the various divisions of the Office to various hours of the day, after intervals of three hours each. In this arrangement Tierce was supposed to be said (as the name tells us, *Ad Tertiam*) at the third hour of the day, three hours after six o'clock in the morning, and therefore at our nine o'clock. About this hour the descent of the Holy Ghost took place, as St. Peter's question in the Acts of the Apostles (II. 15) implies, and as the Church commemorates in her hymn:—

> Cum lucis hora tertia
> Repente mundus intonat.

Accordingly, the little hymn prefixed to Tierce all through the year is an invocation of the Holy Ghost:—

> Nunc sancte nobis Spiritus,
> Unum Patri cum Filio,
> Dignare promptus ingeri
> Nostro refusus pectori.

Cardinal Newman's version brings out the force

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of that *Nunc*—"It is the hour"—better than this more literal translation of our own :—

> Now, Holy Spirit, who art one
> With God the Father, God the Son,
> Within us quickly deign to rest,
> Poured out upon each eager breast.
>
> May mouth and tongue, mind, sense, and strength
> In faithful service join at length!
> May love inflame our hearts, and throw
> O'er all around its ardent glow!
>
> Father, most merciful, ah, do!
> And Thou, the Father's equal, too,
> Who reignest with the Holy Ghost
> For ever 'mid the heavenly host!

It would be very well for those who say the Divine Office to advert to the special significance of these simple lines, so as to make the hymn of Tierce what it really is, a pointed act of devotion to the Holy Ghost; just as if we said at this part of the Office all the year round the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which, as we have already remarked, is substituted for it at Whitsuntide; or the still more beautiful *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, which has warmed many a heart each year these last seven hundred years; for it is supposed to have been written by the great Pope Innocent III, who died that number of years ago. It is the best and most effective of prayers to the Holy Ghost, with its litany of loving titles :—

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Veni, Pater pauperum ;
Veni, Dator munerum ;
  Veni, Lumen cordium !
Consolator optime !
Dulcis hospes animæ,
  Dulce refrigerium.

And with its yearning appeals :—

Lava quod est sordidum,
Riga quod est aridum,
  Sana quod est saucium.
Flecte quod est rigidum,
Fove quod est frigidum,
  Rege quod est devium.

One is able to appreciate this better as rhymed verse when one understands the *rime riche* that satisfies Continental ears. It is good to repeat so holy a prayer, even in the following inadequate form, which is another original translation :—

O Holy Spirit, come !
Send from Thy heavenly home
    One of Thy darts.
Come, Father of the poor,
Giver, whose gifts endure,—
    Come, Light of hearts !

Thou of consolers best,
The bosom's sweetest Guest,
    Sweetest relief ;
Repose 'mid toil and care,
Coolness in heat and glare,
    Solace in grief.

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O Light of lights most blest!
Fill ev'ry faithful breast
That yearns for Thee.
Without Thee nothing can
Be good or pure in man,
Nought harmless be.

Wash Thou the stained and scarred,
Water the dry and hard,
The wounded cure;
Bend down the stubborn will,
Thaw the heart's icy chill,
The strayed allure.

Give to Thy true and tried,
Who in Thy strength confide,
Thy graces seven;
Of merit virtue's store,
Salvation when life's o'er,
And endless heaven.

It has often been noticed how many seeming traces of the Trinity exist in nature, and among the rest how many subjects naturally admit of a threefold division. In these triplets it is often very easy for pious ingenuity to appropriate each to the Three Divine Persons in order; as, for instance, with regard to the three powers of the soul—memory, understanding, and will. In our human way, we think of God the Father as having lived through the past—and indeed the very division of time into past, present, and future might have been used as an illustration of this fancy,—and we feel a sort of comfort in what we may dare to call the unloneliness of God. It is a sort of comfort to our poor human

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hearts not to be obliged to believe in the all-sufficing happiness of the one, eternal, infinite, incomprehensible God, without worshipping, in that unbeginning solitude before creation, the Three Divine Persons in the unity of the Divinity. *O Beata Trinitas!* I will not try to repeat any of the things that theology allows to be said about the relations of the Divine Persons; but there seems to be a certain obvious fitness in associating the *memory* with God the Father, the *understanding* with God the Son, and the *will* with God the Holy Ghost.

Still more, the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord," whom St. Paul calls "our hope" in the first line of his first Epistle to St. Timothy. The same saint beseeches his brethren in Rome "by the charity of the Holy Ghost," who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son.

Again, the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are easily linked in this order with the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. We vow evangelical poverty, because earth seems vile and sordid to us, as to St. Ignatius, when we look up to heaven where the Father is ready to welcome His exiled children to their true home, and to make amends in immortal life for the privations of this mortal life—heaven, whither Jesus has gone to His Father and to our Father, to prepare a place for us. We vow chastity for the sake of the Second Divine

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Person, who became man like to us in everything except sin—the virgin Son of a virgin Mother, who in His sacred humanity is Virgin of virgins in a higher sense of course than the Immaculate Mother herself. Lastly, we vow obedience to men who speak to us in the name of the Holy Ghost; and St. Peter says that "God has given the Holy Ghost to all that obey Him";[1] while St. Stephen's rebuke to the stiff-necked Jews who refused to obey was this: "You always resist the Holy Ghost".[2]

The Holy Ghost is God the Sanctifier, finishing the work of God the Creator and God the Saviour. Whatever can be said of any of God's instruments in the sanctification of our souls must be transcendently true of God Himself. And what Father Faber makes the little child say to its Guardian Angel is in pre-eminent degree and in transcendent measure verified in Him to whom we appropriate the name that is also applied to the angels, when we call Him the Holy Spirit. We are all the little children of God; and to the Holy Ghost, whom "we see not, though so near," we must all say with this little child whose heart the holy Oratorian interprets:—

> The sweetness of Thy soft, low voice
> I am too deaf to hear.
> . . . . . .
> But I have felt Thee in my thoughts
> Fighting with sin for me;
> And when my heart loves God, I know
> The sweetness is from Thee.

[1] Acts v. 32. [2] Acts vii. 51.

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There are two brief warnings given by St. Paul with regard to the Holy Ghost which it is very well to fix deeply in our minds. Writing to the Ephesians (IV. 30) he says, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God"; and to the Thessalonians (1, v. 19), "Extinguish not the Spirit".

The Holy Spirit may be said to be extinguished, quenched, expelled by mortal sin; but *that* we may, with humility and contrition and faith and hope and love, consider as past and gone for us,—a mere sad memory to keep us in holy fear and in the habitual spirit of compunction. But venial sin, imperfection, cowardice, meanness, want of true courage and generosity, are practical subjects for us; and these may be said to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God".

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of joy. Among His fruits are joy, peace, patience; and in the hymn of the Church, the last gift we implore from Him is joy —*Da perenne gaudium*,—which is the first that the priest asks for in the *Directio Intentionis* before Mass: *Gaudium cum pace.* His infinite joy cannot of course be dimmed by our sin, any more than the brilliance of the sun in the cloudless noon can be dimmed by the smoke of a little pile of weeds burning in a field. But the insults which our infidelities offer to our Divine Guest—*Propter inhabitantem spiritum Ejus in vobis*[1]—are the same as if He were really at our mercy thus. Suppose that, in the times when crowns were often won by violence, a wicked prince deter-

[1] Rom. VIII. 30.

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mined to kill his royal father and laid his plans and prepared his dagger for the deed, and then at a favourable moment aimed it straight at his father's heart; and suppose that the old king wore secret armour, from which the dagger glanced off harmlessly. The king's life would be safe, but this would not save his son from all the guilt of murder and parricide. So, though we cannot "grieve the spirit of God" by our sins and faults and infidelities, the guilt is the same for us as if we could; and this motive ought to be equally strong in making us anxious to catch the faintest whisper of Divine grace, and to obey promptly all the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Credo in Spiritum sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem— "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life". Love is life; and the Holy Spirit, who is the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is the life of all the souls whom the Father made and the Son redeemed. It is not by chance that, in one of that exquisite series of antiphons in the Matins of Trinity Sunday, one of the triple invocations runs thus: *Libera nos, salva nos, vivifica nos, O Beata Trinitas!* We might not at once think of creation as liberating us from the bondage of nothingness; but the two other verbs fit admirably in their order the Second and the Third Persons of the Blessed Trinity. *Libera nos, salva nos, vivifica nos, O Beata Trinitas!*

In the third place comes that imperative entreaty, *vivifica*, addressed to Him who is called in the Nicene

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Creed *Dominus vivificans. O Domine vivificans, vivifica me!* O life-giving Lord, give me life. O Holy Spirit, vivify me, quicken me, bring me to life, give me life, make me live! *Vivifica me.* This suppliant imperative occurs ten times in Psalm CXVIII.; and we may well address this entreaty to the Holy Ghost, joining with it, as we have done, the Nicene epithet: *O Domine vivificans, vivifica me!* O Lord and Giver of life, give me the true life of the spirit—the life of grace—and never let that life be extinguished in my soul till the seal of a happy death ensures the immortal life of heaven, where, with the Father and the Son, Thou livest and reignest for ever.

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THOUGHTS ON THE BLESSED TRINITY.

THE Church ends a great many of her antiphons in the Office of Trinity Sunday with that same simple phrase, "O Blessed Trinity!" She can find no better way of expressing the feelings of adoration, love, and amazement which thrill her heart in the contemplation of that great mystery than by a childlike repetition of the one word, *O Beata Trinitas!*—breaking in perpetually as a joyful chorus after all the Matin psalms, each ending with its trinity or triplet of aspirations, such as these: "Thee we invoke, Thee we praise, Thee we adore, O Blessed Trinity! Thou our hope, Thou our salvation, Thou our honour, O Blessed Trinity! *Libera nos, salva nos, vivifica nos, O beata Trinitas!* To Thee be praise, to Thee be glory, to Thee be thanksgiving for eternal ages, O Blessed Trinity!"

The holy author of one of the holiest of books, "The Imitation of Christ," asks us in his first chapter: "What doth it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity if thou be void of humility and consequently displeasing to the Trinity?" Well, we are not going now to displease the Blessed Trinity in that particular way. Like the Church herself, our

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tribute of homage to this mystery of mysteries, this queen of mysteries shall be little more than repeating over and over in substance the adoring invocation, *O Beata Trinitas!*

We shall not attempt to develop what Faith teaches us or allows Theology to teach us about the ineffable relations between God the Father, and His only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son. We accept simply and implicitly, whether or not we are able to put it explicitly into words, all that God deigns to tell us about Himself, all that He has in any way revealed about His nature and His attributes. We "believe whatever the Son of God has said"—*credo quicquid dixit Dei filius*—and this is one of the things He has said: "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost". "In the name," not "in the names," implying the unity of the Godhead; "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," implying their coequal Divinity, with succession of order, not of duration or power or dignity—three Divine persons, equal and therefore infinite in every respect, yet really distinct, each from the others—three in the reality of a distinct subsistence, one in the unity of an undivided nature: one God, the one supreme, eternal, and infinite God, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth and of all things.

This is substantially what the Catechism teaches to little children, and the most abstruse treatises can

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teach little more to the most learned theologians. Whenever we read any fuller account of the mystery, we are warned by St. Augustine to put away any conceptions that the words may call up of any similarity between these Divine mysteries and human things which may be described by some of the same words. *Quidquid tibi, cum ista cogitas, corporeae similitudinis occurrerit, abige, abnue, nega, respue, abjice, fuga.* "Whatever similitude drawn from corporal things may occur to you while you are thinking of these heavenly things, spurn it as unworthy and irrelevant—repel it, reject it, put it to flight."

I will suggest only two thoughts, one leading on towards a belief in this mystery, the other a conclusion drawn from that belief.

And, first, would it not be sovereignly unreasonable to dream of making our puny human reason the measure of the Infinite and the Divine, especially when many mere natural marvels which actually fall under our senses are utterly beyond our comprehension? I will take one of these phenomena with which we are all familiar from books and newspapers; and, instead of stating the mere fact, I will put it in this way. Suppose one of us doing what I hope none of us shall ever have to do—emigrating, for instance, to California—and suppose that some remarkable event occurs the very day you leave Dublin for Cork to catch the Cunard steamer at Queenstown. The railway journey even to Cork is tedious enough; and then the delay about getting

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on board in Cork Harbour, and afterwards the eight or ten days upon the Atlantic; and, if you are able to resume your journey at once, another terrible stretch by rail as long as the sea voyage, night and day, in the cars (as they call them there) past Chicago, over the Rocky Mountains, down to the Golden Gate. Suppose you have friends to welcome you to San Francisco, and after a great deal of conversation you speak of the last event you saw at the moment of leaving Dublin. But this is no news to *them*. They saw it all in their own newspapers three weeks before. They show you the files of their journals, proving that the news had reached them before your train had reached Kildare. You recall all you have gone through meanwhile, travelling without pause or rest—so long it seems now as you look back on it!—but the invisible electric current had conveyed the message over all that weary space of land and sea in less time than it has taken to put this illustration into words.

This is one of the marvels we are familiar with, even in the order of Nature; and how much more must the supernatural order be full of wonders beyond our knowledge and above our comprehension! God forgive the hideous absurdity, the insanity and impiety of those who would expect the uncreated Creator and Lord of a world teeming with such wonders to be within the tiny grasp of their created intelligence!

No, the angel was right who taught this lesson in

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a different form to St. Augustine when meditating on the Trinity as he walked along the seashore. In the midst of his meditation, you remember, he came upon a little child who was busy scooping out a hole in the sand, and then filling a shell with the sea-water, and emptying shellful after shellful into the hole in the sand. "What are you doing, my good child?" "Emptying the sea into this hole." "But that little hole can never hold all the vast sea." "Just as well as your brain can hold the idea of the infinite Godhead."

Prostrate, therefore, in silent adoration before the throne of God, one in Nature and three in Persons, how dare we—and this is our second thought, and the sole conclusion I shall draw from the dogma we are contemplating—how can any one whose creed is based on this utterly incomprehensible mystery, hesitate, on the mere ground of impossibility or inconceivability, to accept any other doctrine that God deigns to propose to us? Ah! rational philosophers, as they call themselves, are rational enough to laugh to scorn the qualms and scruples of Heresy picking and choosing for itself among the mysteries of faith; and they are eager to admit that, if Faith must be accepted at all, it must be accepted in all the fulness of Catholic doctrine.

This, therefore, is the great fundamental mystery of our faith which in a certain way sums up and includes all; and therefore it is with this mystery that the Church reaches the climax of her great solemni-

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ties which commemorate the birth of the Son of God, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and the mission of the Holy Ghost. And then on the octave of Pentecost she bids us fall in worship before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity; and no other celebration of this description follows till Advent begins again the yearly cycle of festivals.

There are many Christians, and perhaps we ourselves are among them, who do not realize habitually their faith in the Blessed Trinity, and who neglect to cherish a sufficiently explicit devotion to the First and the Third of the Divine Persons; who do not turn directly and earnestly enough in their thoughts and prayers to God the Father and to God the Holy Ghost.

There is one little act of devotion towards the Blessed Trinity which, no matter how thoughtless we may be, we are none of us able to omit. Every Litany indeed begins with a cry for mercy to God the Father of Heaven, to God the Son, Redeemer of the world, to God the Holy Ghost, to the Holy Trinity one God; but we may perhaps recite Litanies seldom, whereas we must every day, and several times each day, bless ourselves with the sign of the cross. That sacred sign was marked on our infant brows when we were made Christians in Baptism, and each repetition of it is a profession of the Christian Faith, of which it is a practical summary: for the outward action represents the Cross, the symbol of our Redemption, and the accompanying words renew

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our original consecration to the three Divine Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity.

It is a small thing to resolve, but it is something, and it is an appropriate conclusion to this meditation, namely, to determine with the help of God's grace to make the sign of the cross henceforward less through routine and habit (though it is a blessed habit) and more in a spirit of faith. In saying grace before great public dinners, where men of all creeds were present, O'Connell was famous for his large sign of the cross made slowly and reverently; and Father de Ravignan in the pulpit of Notre Dame used to make the sign of the cross before his sermon with such devotion as to impress at once the most irreligious of his hearers, one of whom whispered to his neighbour: "He has preached already without saying a word".

Alius quidem sic, alius vero sic (1 Cor. VII. 7). "One after this manner, another after that." May we wrest St. Paul's phrase a little from its meaning by applying it to the different ways, the different degrees of perfection and merit, with which different persons perform one and the self-same action? Our habitual manner of signing ourselves with the sign of the cross ought very properly to get the benefit of the practical axiom: "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well".

Let us, then, in this brief prayer — for it is a prayer, a turning to the supernatural, an elevation of the soul, an act of consecration—in this prayer, and in every form of prayer, let us try to realize our

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faith in the dignity and grandeur of prayer itself, whereby we bow down before the Sovereign Majesty of God. It is hard to believe, but I have seen it stated,[1] that the natives of Madagascar, even before they became Christians, used the following as one of their prayers:—

"O Eternal! have mercy on me, because I am passing away. O Infinite! have mercy on me, because I am but a speck. O Most Mighty! have mercy on me, because I am weak. O Source of Life! have mercy on me, because I draw nigh to death. O All-knowing and All-seeing! have mercy on me, because I am in darkness. O All-bountiful! have mercy on me, because I am poor. O Infinite and All-sufficient! have mercy on me, because I am nothing."

It was a great surprise to me to find such a prayer as this attributed to unenlightened pagans; and there happens to be another surprising little circumstance connected with it. I repeated it once in the exquisite chapel of a certain Monastery of St. Alphonsus, and the next day I received by post from one of the Redemptoristines the following metrical paraphrase of this prayer of the Malgaches, as the French call the inhabitants of that great island:—

Have mercy on this transient breath,
O Thou Eternal One!
For swifter than the summer cloud,
I pass, and lo! am gone.

[1] In the *Ave Maria*, May, 1881, quoting Placourt's "History of Madagascar".

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Have mercy on this speck of earth,
O Being Infinite!
For smaller than a grain of sand
My soul is in Thy sight.

Have mercy on this fragile reed,
O strong and mighty God!
For faltering are my feeble steps
Since first life's path I trod.

Have mercy on this pauper vile,
O Bountiful and Good!
For, like a starving beggar-child,
I cry to Thee for food.

Have mercy on these darkened eyes,
O uncreated Light!
'Mid gloomy shadows here I grope—
Ah! shine upon my night.

Have mercy on this foolish mind,
O Wisdom high, supreme!
Teach me Thy sweet and wondrous ways
To love, adore, esteem.

Have mercy on this false, false heart,
O Thou Eternal Truth!
Nurtured 'mid errors and deceits
I've been from thoughtless youth.

Have mercy on this fallen one,
O Beauty ever new!
How faint a trace of heavenly grace
Remains to meet Thy view.

Have mercy on me, Fount of Life!
For I am nigh to death;
Oh! in the refuge of Thy Heart
Receive my dying breath.

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Did Sister Teresa retain all these petitions so faithfully after one hurried hearing? Her paraphrase keeps close to the substance, but not to the order of the Malagasy invocations, of which this is the last: "O Infinite and All-sufficient! have mercy on me, because I am nothing". Yes, we are mere nothings, and God is our God and our all. He is our Creator, and Lord, and Judge, terrible and mighty; but He is at the same time our loving Father and our merciful Redeemer; and we are not afraid to address Him in the childlike words which welled up from the devout heart of His servant, Father Faber:—

Have mercy on us, God most high!
Who lift our hearts to Thee;
Have mercy on us, worms of earth,
Most Holy Trinity!

Oh, listen then, Most Pitiful!
To Thy poor creature's heart—
It blesses Thee that Thou art God,
That Thou art what Thou art.

Most ancient of all mysteries!
Before Thy throne we lie,
Have mercy now, most Merciful!
Most Holy Trinity!

Let us fix some of these holy words in our hearts and repeat them occasionally, or at least the Church's cry of love and adoration, *O beata Trinitas!*

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MIDSUMMER THOUGHTS.

We are almost exactly half-way through the year. There are special advantages in reminding ourselves now, just at this particular time, of what we determined upon or ought to have determined upon at the beginning of the year, and in seeing how far we have fallen away from our good-purposes: for, alas, we may take for granted that we have fallen away.

And why is this particular time specially suited for this purpose? Because earlier, and especially at the very beginning, the future seems to stretch in front of us a long way, we think we have plenty of time before us; and on the other hand, when the year is completely over, it seems too late for anything except sorrow for lost opportunities. There may still be time for us, but not *that* time. Whereas, while there is a peculiar and pathetic emphasis about the warning administered to us by the bare fact that we are already half-way through, this warning has the additional advantage of finding us with one-half of this particular portion of life's treasure still unwasted in our hands, still capable of being turned to proper account, if indeed it be God's will to leave us here till the end of it.

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The lesson that we are thus trying to learn from midsummer may be linked with a striking text from the Old Testament, at the beginning of the third chapter of Habbacuc which is headed: "Prayer of the Prophet for Ignorances". "Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years bring it to life." No doubt a certain violence is needed to wrest this text to our present purpose. No doubt the prophet in this passage is addressing God Himself and imploring Him to bring to life and to light the work of the Redemption when the fullness of time should have come. This is pre-eminently and transcendently God's work, *opus tuum*, more His and more Divine than the work of the six days at the beginning. We might dare to say that the omnipotence of the Divinity was more directly needed for Redemption than for creation. *Opus divinissimum salus animarum.* And it is of this work that the Prophet speaks, for he calls upon God Himself distinctly and by name. *Domine, opus tuum in medio annorum vivifica illud.* "O Lord, Thy work in the midst of the years bring it to life. In the midst of the years Thou shalt make it known; when Thou art angry, Thou wilt have mercy."

This prophetic prayer is still appropriate for us all, though the prophecy contained in it has long since been accomplished, and the Church begins one of her Ascension hymns by saying to our Lord, "Opus peregisti tuum". The work of the Redemption has been wrought, but not yet fully and finally for each individual soul; the application of the merits of the

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Atonement to "every man that cometh into this world" has gone on and will go on during all the moments of the centuries through which this human dispensation will endure. Each little life is for him who lives it the middle of the years, the central point of the world's history. For him during his brief day Bethlehem and Calvary are renewed: the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world is perpetually to the end of the world immolated anew. "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, the same for ever." He lived and died for us individually; He delivered Himself up to the death of the Cross, not for mankind in the abstract, but for each of us individually and by name. *Dilexit me.* And therefore we can bring that cry of the Prophet Habbacuc nearer home to ourselves; each of us can make his own of it. For we too are God's work, *opus tuum*, the immediate work of God's hands. So He often calls us in His Holy Word; and the priest, praying at the last over every dying man, reminds God that the poor creature who is passing away is truly His creature. "Remember, O Lord, he is Thy creature, not made by strange gods, but by Thee the only living and true God." Understood therefore in this personal and confined sense, this petition of Habbacuc is thus the same as that *vivifica me* of the Royal Psalmist, to which we should do well to pay the attention that seems to be claimed for it by the extraordinary stress laid upon it in one of the holiest portions of the inspired Word of God.

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Vivifica me. This precise phrase occurs ten times in a single psalm. That single psalm indeed is equal in quantity and in quality to a dozen other psalms; it is vastly the longest of all: Psalm CXVIII. which is spread over all the "small hours" of the Breviary and which all who say the Divine Office repeat in full every day of their lives. Whatever else may be omitted, whatever changes the Church may allow with the changing seasons, Psalm CXVIII. is said every day from beginning to end. Some may have repeated it many thousands of times without ever noticing how yearningly, how wistfully we are taught in this 118th psalm to implore over and over again, each of us for himself, *vivifica me:* quicken Thou me, enliven me, vivify me, make me live, make me truly live, make me live the life of grace which will lead me on into the everlasting life of glory. For some who seem to live are dead. "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment."

Vivifica me means all this and more, but it is usually Englished by the old Anglo-Saxon word, *quicken*, not in the sense "to hasten" but "to endue with life," as when our Divine Redeemer is called the Judge of the quick and the dead, that is, the living and the dead. Life is the supreme gift. True life is beatitude. "If thou wilt enter into life," says Christ. Only that—life. *Fac hoc, et vives.* "Do this and thou shalt live." "The just shall enter into life everlasting." The never-ending existence of the impious is not life, and the Psalmist will not

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profane the glorious word *resurrection* by applying it to their dreadful awakening from the sleep of death. *Non resurgent impii.* But *we* cry from the depths: *Surgam et ibo ad Patrem.* "I will arise and will go to my Father." And of each of us may our heavenly Father say with the father of the Prodigal: "This my son was dead and is come to life again." *Mortuus est et revixit.*

To that true life and to all that leads on to it King David's prayer applies: *Vivifica me.* None of its repetitions refers to merely natural life, like Job's energetic phrase: *Spiraculum Omnipotentis vivificavit me* (XXXIII. 4). "The breath of the Almighty gave me life." With the various repetitions the Royal Prophet joins a variety of motives which appeal powerfully to the heart of our merciful and loving God. It is repeated twice each at Prime, Tierce, and Sext, and four times at None, not counting some other forms of the same idea. Most frequently the entreaty is strengthened by such pleas as "according to Thy mercy," "according to Thy word," "for the sake of Thy word"; *propter eloquium tuum, in misericordia tua.* And once when he ventures to mention justice—*in aequitate tuâ vivifica me*—the Psalmist takes care instantly to betake himself to the shelter of God's mercy, adding the prayer immediately: *Et veniat super me misericordia tua!* For Habbacuc in the same place had said, as we heard a few moments ago, "When Thou art angry, Thou wilt have mercy," and the marvellous dramatist never spoke a truer word than Portia's

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"Remember that in the course of *justice* none of us should see salvation — we do pray for *mercy*". *In misericordia tua vivifica me.*

Let us, however, adapt this prayer of Habbacuc to ourselves in a completely different sense, considering it, not as an entreaty addressed by us to God, but as a warning addressed by God to us. Let us devote a few midsummer thoughts to this duty of examining ourselves in the middle of our work and in the middle of the day and of the year and in the middle of our years. This last agrees most closely with the *in medio annorum* of the original, if we should take it in the sense of Dante's *nel mezzo del cammino mio* at the opening of his mighty poem. But for all of us, the youngest as well as the oldest—and who knows if more for the oldest than for the youngest?—the middle of life's journey may already be far past, and it is a vague, uncertain date at the best. It is more practical to change one word in honour of midsummer and imagine God admonishing us to make our work living and real in the middle of the year. *Opus tuum in medio anni vivifica illud.*

Midsummer, mid-Lent, midnight, midday—these and many similarly formed words show how readily we divide various transactions of life into beginning, middle, and end. Several of those pithy embodiments of human experience which we call proverbs might be cited to prove the importance of the beginning and of the end. "Well begun is half done" is shorter and better than the Latin pentameter,

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Dimidium facti qui bene coepit habet—

and "all's well that ends well" has also its Latin counterpart, *Finis coronat opus*, "the end crowns the work". There is probably no corresponding proverb to set forth the importance of the middle of a work, for *in medio stat virtus* does not bear this meaning but rather condemns "the falsehood of extremes,"[1] and is equivalent to the saying of Cleobulus, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, "the mean is best". But, though this truth seems not to be embodied in any proverb, it is true that it will be very well for us when we are half-way through any duty, to call ourselves to account, so as to shake off sloth if it has been creeping upon us and to employ better the part of the time that still remains to us for the doing of this work. Any sincere person who has a generous ambition to do his work well cannot in such circumstances fail to be impressed by the fact that so much of the time allotted for the task in question is over already, and this thought will urge him to use the rest of the time with greater earnestness, so that the final result may not be altogether unsatisfactory.

It would be very wise to apply a test of this nature not only to long periods like a year, such as the one which is half spent, but also to far smaller fragments of our lifetime—to a single day, to a single hour, to a single one out of the many and various duties amongst which our days and hours are portioned out.

This midway self-examination is not optional for

[1] Tennyson.

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those who are bound to be guided by St. Ignatius's theory and practice on the point. Not content with teaching his children how to begin and end the day well—to begin the day with a fervent morning oblation consecrating to God all the thoughts, words and deeds, joys and sorrows and hopes and fears and pains and labours of the coming day; and then, when the day is all-but gone, to end the day by a careful and systematic examination of conscience—the wise and practical saint legislates not only for the beginning and the end but also for the middle, and bids his disciples make a similar examination when the day is half-way through, while there still remains enough of the day to furnish us with opportunities for carrying out the resolution which any sincere self-examination must inspire to try and spend the second half of the day better. To reserve all our self-scrutiny and self-reproaches for the last thing at night would be a little like crying over spilt milk or locking the stable after the steed is stolen; whereas the real point is not to let the steed be stolen or the milk spilt. "There is no use," says Mrs. Poyser, "in watering last year's crops." "Don't shiver for last year's snow," said Richard Whately. The author of "Adam Bede" and the English Archbishop of Dublin are not very high spiritual authorities, and their aphorisms can be pushed too far. Yet certainly it is not last year's crop, but this year's crop, the crop at present in the ground, that we can hope to see benefited by the genial rain which has

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now fallen perhaps in sufficient abundance and which will, please God, be followed by plenty of ripening sunshine. May that rain and sunshine symbolize the beneficent action of God's grace in our souls. *Domine, opus tuum in medio annorum vivifica illud.*

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OUR SINFUL PAST.

We should do well to join frequently together, as a sort of ejaculatory prayer, the fourteenth verse of the eighteenth Psalm, and the seventh verse of the twenty-fourth. But it is convenient to invert the order, and to begin with the words which give the latter Psalm its name: *Ad te, Domine, levavi animam meam.* The other is remembered also by its opening words: *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei.* Our little prayer will then run thus: "To Thee, O Lord! I have lifted up my soul. The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember. From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord! and from the sins of others spare Thy servant."

"To Thee, O Lord! have I lifted up my soul." A good beginning for every prayer and every meditation, but especially for a meditation, however brief and slight, on my sins. Before daring to think of my sins I must first try to lift up my soul to God, to livein the white light of His sanctity. To grope among the sins and the miseries of the past may be dangerous in some states of the soul. It may be a fresh temptation. Something may happen like what is told of an ancient battlefield: The plunderers came

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after the battle to despoil the dead, but one lay among the dead with life enough still to grasp his sword, and he pretended to be dead, like the rest, till his enemy drew near to rob the corpse, when the seeming corpse, with a convulsive effort, stabbed him to the heart. So it may be with the ghosts of dead sins.

Yes, before every examination of conscience, before every retrospect, before every glance backwards towards the past, it is well to lift up our souls to God, to place ourselves in His presence, to look upwards. There is a cavern in Southern Italy, in which poisonous vapours cling to the ground, as the guides prove for the traveller by flinging in dogs, which instantly become insensible, and would perish, if not dragged out at once, while men are safe as long as they hold themselves erect. To grope and grovel amidst the sinful past, is perilous in like manner; we must stand upright; we must lift up our souls to God. "To Thee, O Lord! have I lifted up my soul."

"The sins of my youth and my ignorances remember not, O Lord!" Yet many have to begin still farther back. Not youth only, but childhood. It is possible for the very young to sin. Some, thanks be to God, are kept perfectly pure, and carry their childhood on through maturer years. What pathos, what awful interest there would be in contrasting soul with soul, if the inner history of souls were laid bare to us! But our own souls—my own soul. What is its history? How stands, above all, the record of its dealings with God, its use of His

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graces? For all the rest matters little. What was its past? What is its present? What will be its future? But the cry of the Psalmist, which is now echoing in my heart, regards the past. "The sins of my youth and my ignorances, O Lord, do not remember!"

Youth is not innocent, nor even childhood. The childish heart is capable of more evil than those whose duty it is to watch over it allow themselves to imagine. Many, thank God, are fenced in so securely, and seem to have inherited by right of birth such sinless souls in such sinless bodies that, in the atmosphere of a pious, busy, happy home, they grow up almost unconscious of evil, yet, no doubt, sufficiently aware of it to make the pains they take, the prayers they say, the watchfulness they exercise, the shrinking they feel from everything that is wrong—to make all this not merely mechanical, or a matter of habit and training, but with enough of their own good will, and of God's grace in it, to make it all eminently meritorious and pleasing in God's sight; changing for them the innocence of ignorance into the truer and safer innocence of solid, humble virtue.

But, alas! there are many who, even in seemingly safe circumstances, are not safe, and who, in looking back to their early days, feel something like St. Augustine's self-reproach, *Tantillus puer, tantus peccator!* "So small a child, so great a sinner!" Happy they for whom the special dangers and

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uncertainties of childhood and youth are past, and, perhaps, long past. "When I look back upon my former race"—as Cardinal Newman begins his grand, austere sonnet—and when I think what the human soul and the human body are, and "what the heart of the young man says to the Psalmist," I can only wonder, and, while grieving, rejoice, and bless God with tears for having brought me safe through so many dangers, and saved me from so many worse dangers which might have proved fatal: so that, even now this moment, I am at least able to lift up my soul to God and cry to Him for mercy on the sins of my youth and my ignorances. Do not remember them, O Lord! Or if the human entreaty of man to man, *forget and forgive*, cannot be addressed to God, forgive, at least, what Thou, O Lord, canst not forget, and what I must not forget, but must remember with contrition and humiliation, in order that Thou mayest remember with mercy and pardon.

"The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember." Yes, my ignorances. I was very ignorant. Then especially I could claim my part in that prayer of our Redeemer on the Cross, the first of the Seven words of the Crucified—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Those for whom that petition was first made, directly and immediately, knew enough to make what they were doing a terrible crime. And so did I. God's voice to my young heart was clear enough. Yet still I knew not what I was doing. I was ignorant of much that I

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now know well; and God, who is just as well as merciful, must needs judge me according to my knowledge. But, ah! my Lord, while I bless Thee for much of my ignorance in those bygone days as a safeguard and a grace, I knew enough of Thy claims and Thy graces, and of sin, to make my abuse of Thy graces very sinful, though with not one hundredth part of the sinfulness that would attach to much less grievous transgression committed now against the fullness of Thy light.

Our sinful past. All our past sins—how many! how grievous! Have they even yet ceased? Have they been duly repented of? Have they been fully atoned for?

Alas! how many and how grievous! Go back to the various places where you have lived. Are they not haunted by the ghosts of past sins? All those years have been adding to these immense piles—thoughts, words, and deeds, accumulating inconceivably through the incessant activity of the human mind. And all those years we were never for a single minute alone—God knows every word we spoke, and reads our most secret thoughts. But He has borne with us till this hour; and now He has given us the grace to bewail our sinful past and to be humbly resolved on showing practically the sincerity of our sorrow.

For it is not right to dwell too long on the past, even in a spirit of grateful compunction. Such retrospective acts of contrition are meant to be really

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"acts," not merely vague feelings—are meant to react at once on the passing present and the immediate future. And so we turn away from the past with another cry for mercy on our hidden sins, and those sins of others that may in any way be ours. "From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord! and from the sins of others spare Thy servant."

My hidden sins. It is not hypocrisy that hides our sins from others. It would be a great additional sin to act with bravado, to make a parade of our sins. Thanks be to God, we have so far been hypocrites as not to add scandal to our other sins by letting those sins be known. The hidden sins, however, spoken of here are rather the sins that are hidden from ourselves. But nothing is hidden from God. "What we are in God's sight, that we are and nothing more." What am I in God's sight? Are there sins, hidden even from myself, that make me displeasing in the eyes of God? From any such "hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord! and from the sins of others spare Thy servant". We may be responsible in different degrees for the sins committed by others. The good influence of others has been used by God as the instrument of many graces to us. So might we have been for others. And we may be more directly responsible for some who in one way or another were under our charge. From such sins of others, O merciful Lord, spare Thy servant. For I am Thy servant. I wish to serve Thee faithfully. I spurn and abhor the original cry of revolt,

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Non serviam! I *will* serve, I *will* obey. "I am not worthy to be called Thy child; make me as one of Thy hired servants." And then spare Thy servant. *Parce servo tuo.* "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. The sins of my youth and my ignorances do not remember. From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from the sins of others spare Thy servant."

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DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

LET us strive to bring home to our hearts and minds, as closely and as vividly as we can, some of the motives that urge us to believe more firmly, to adore more profoundly, and to love more ardently and more tenderly our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ under the most pathetic symbol, memorial, instrument and organ of His love, His ever adorable Heart.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most effective means of infusing into our hearts the true spirit of Christianity. It is much more than a mere "devotion" in the sense in which that word is often used to denote a peculiar exercise of piety which is not at all of obligation, but which may be profitably employed by many devout souls. Some indeed of the authorized emblems and practices by which the faithful show their special love for the Sacred Heart *are* mere devotions in this narrower meaning of the term; and these, while we must respect them as being approved and encouraged by the Church, we are at perfect liberty to use or not to use according as they suit our character and our circumstances. But the substance of this devotion

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may be said to belong to the very essence of Christianity, so directly does it spring from devout and earnest meditation on the ineffable dogma of the Divine Incarnation, so closely is it wound up with the loving worship of our Lord's sacred humanity.

That loving worship, all our love and all our adoration, must ultimately be referred to the Person of the Eternal Word become incarnate for our sake. The object of our love and worship is always the same, the Son of God made flesh, "Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day and the same for ever" (Heb. XIII. 8); but in these latter times we have learned to think of Him in this special way as showing to us His divine Heart, that throbbing Heart of flesh and blood which suffered and was pierced for us and which symbolizes the love that made Jesus do all this for our sake—the love which is as human and as personal as the love of a father for his children, of a friend for a friend—the love of a true human heart which is also the Heart of God.

And, therefore, it would be wrong to imagine that there is need of a peculiarly tender heart to appreciate duly the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or that this Devotion is fit only for the more sensitive nature of women, for holy nuns, for persons cut off by disposition or vocation from the hard, cold, commonplace world of ordinary life. No, every true Christian heart, whether man's or woman's or child's, is tender enough for the tenderness of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. For what is it but another

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device for exciting in our hearts what ought to be the master passion of every real Christian—a living, loving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; above all, a living, loving faith in the love wherewith Jesus has loved us and loves us? What is it but another security against incurring that awful malediction of St. Paul: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. XVI. 22).

The mystery of mysteries is that the Infinite and Eternal and Almighty God should not only tolerate our love but yearn for it, beg for it, demand it. What pains He has taken to secure our love! Even if Jesus Christ had never lived and died for us, even if the Son of God had never become the Son of Mary, even if the world had never been lost, or, being lost, had been redeemed in some other manner—if there had been no Christmas crib, no Babe of Bethlehem nestling in Its young Mother's arms—even so, we should still have been bound to love with our whole hearts and with our whole souls and with our whole minds and with all our strength the great God who made us, although then He might seem to be far away. But He did not remain far away; He came nearer to us. In the depths of the eternal counsels the Son of God said, "Behold I come". And in the fullness of time He came as the Child of Mary to live a life of poverty and suffering and to die a death of agony and shame. He showed His love for us in a thousand ways by word and deed through all the touching vicissitudes

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of His mortal life, but most of all at the beginning and at the end.

At the end He accepted eagerly what He Himself had fixed as the supreme test of love: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend". Jesus laid down His life for us whom sin had made His enemies. Nay, even after death He would verify literally in Himself that which is the most exaggerated, the most extravagant expression of a devoted human love: "I would give My heart's blood for you". Jesus not merely said this, but did it. Fulfilling one of the minutest particulars of prophecy, He poured out for us the last drop of His heart's blood when the spear of the centurion pierced His side as He hung dead upon the Cross.

This was at the very end, but so it was all through. Let us turn our hearts and minds back to the very beginning of that marvellous life of Divine expiation. And at the beginning what do we see?

He wore no robe of glory bright,
To make me all His own
He hid His majesty and might
And showed His love alone.
A child upon a mother's knee—
Was e'er a gentler art?
He made Himself in all like me,
That He might win my heart.

He did not woo with stores of gold
Or gems of purest ray,
But gently did the robe unfold
That o'er His bosom lay.

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And lo! a thorn-crowned Heart was there,
Bathed in a soft, bright flame,
And writ in red upon it were
The letters of my name.[1]

Yes, the name of every one of us is written in the Heart of Jesus; He holds us all in His Heart. God forbid that any of our names should be blotted out for ever from that Book of Life. Only sin can do *that*—grievous sin, unrepented, unconfessed, unforgiven. Even we, poor sinners, the worst of us, are dear to the Heart of our Lord. Every one of us has as personal a share in His Heart's love as St. Paul had when he said, "Jesus hath loved me and hath delivered Himself for me". Jesus lived and died, not for mankind in general, not for mankind in the abstract, but with a personal love for each of His poor creatures, for each of us individually and by name. And to each of us He puts the question that He put to St. Peter: "Lovest thou Me?" God grant that we may be able to answer truthfully, but with humble fear: "Lord, Thou knowest all things —Thou knowest that I love Thee".

But we must prove our love, as Jesus has proved His love. He died for us: we must live for Him. Our life must correspond with our faith, especially our faith in that most overwhelming manifestation of our Lord's love to which Father Faber refers in one of his hymns, when he speaks of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as

[1] Probably by Father Coleridge, S.J.

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A Heart that has a Mother and a treasure of red blood,
A Heart that we can pray to and feed upon for food.

One of the surest signs of the sincerity of our devotion to the Heart of Jesus will always be the frequency and fervour of our Holy Communions. The Sacred Heart reveals itself most clearly in Its deepest disguise, the Blessed Eucharist. There at least, the daring words of a greater Oratorian[1] are true:—

That even Omnipotence will not do more.

"What more could I do for My vineyard and have not done?" Nothing, Lord. You have given us all, for You have given us Yourself. Let not all this love be wasted upon us! Let it not be all in vain. May Jesus, in the sacrament of His love, be for us through life what we hope and pray He will be in death—our true Viaticum, our food for the journey, supporting us during our journey through this world, and then at our journey's end placing us safe at last in our eternal Home, where the veils of sacrament will be withdrawn, and we shall love and bless for ever our loving Lord and merciful Redeemer, face to face and heart to heart.

[1] Cardinal Newman.

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THE HEALING OF NAAMAN.

THERE are exquisitely appropriate arrangements in the liturgy of the Church which often escape the notice of those who year after year, day by day make use of the Missal and Breviary. For instance the link between the Epistle and Gospel of the ferial Mass for the third Monday of Lent may well pass unobserved. The Gospel is taken from the fourth chapter of St. Luke, where our Lord says that "there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus, the Prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian"; and what serves as an Epistle in that Mass is taken from the fifth chapter of the Fourth Book of Kings, where the full story is told of that miraculous healing of Naaman, to which our Lord makes this passing allusion.

He referred to it in support of a truth which at another time He expressed by saying that "many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob while the children of the kingdom shall be cast into exterior darkness"—the children cast out, and strangers taking their place. At the last day many such contrasts shall be revealed in the sight of all men and

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angels. Many with every advantage of birth, education and vocation, shall then fare far worse than some to whom these graces have been denied. For instance, we who have been born in the Catholic Faith and trained up in it carefully and have enjoyed its sacraments and its other graces and blessings since we were first able to receive them—we shall have to account for every one of these graces and our use of them; and our merciful Redeemer will be obliged to judge us much more severely than others who, without any fault of their own, were not born into the possession of such precious privileges, but, perhaps, were enabled by God's special grace to fight their way into the Church and into the enjoyment of graces which we have enjoyed as a mere matter of course without any effort or sacrifice on our part.

Even so Naaman the Syrian, coming from afar, was cured of his leprosy, while many lepers that lived near the prophet were left in their misery, partly on account of the greater faith that Naaman showed in thus coming from afar. But there are certain other facts about him which are very instructive. Let us think over them a little.

As so often happens, Naaman's faith was caught from the faith of others. Torch kindles torch. We are all immensely affected by those with whom we come in contact. Virtues and good qualities are contagious to a certain extent, as well as leprosy and sin.

Naaman was the commander-in-chief of the army of Benadad, King of Syria. He was, says the in-

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spired historian, "valiant and rich, but a leper". Ah! that terrible "but". Probably with all his valour and all his riches, he considered any coward and any beggar an object of envy because free from that most miserable disease which affected him in its most malignant form, the white leprosy. Leprosy, indeed, had not among the Syrians all the social deprivations attached to it which the Mosaic law established for the Hebrew people; for Naaman still commanded the army and waited upon his King, whereas among the Jews we have an instance of a King himself, when struck with leprosy, being cut off from human society.

Now it happened that, sometime before this, a party of Syrian marauders, in one of their forays across the border, had carried off a little Hebrew girl who came to be in the service of the wife of Naaman. The name of the captive maiden is not recorded in the Book of Kings, but surely it is written down in the Book of Life; for God made her an instrument in this work of His mercy, to which Jesus so long afterwards looks back with complacency. She was one of the reasons why, although "there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus, none of them was cleansed, but rather Naaman the Syrian". This miracle was due in part to the unselfish charity of this nameless slave.

We may fairly suppose that Naaman and his wife had partly deserved this stretch of God's mercy by their kindness to the poor young stranger. And so

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she pitied her master in his affliction, and said to her mistress: "I wish my master could go to the prophet in Samaria: he would certainly heal him of the leprosy which he hath".

This is all we know about her. She makes her suggestion and then drops out of sight; and we are left to conjecture how much the girl's prayers and personal character may have had to do with the results which follow from her suggestion. But we may without rashness conjecture that this "parvula puella," young as she was and a slave, added weight to her words by her character and demeanour. If she had been no better than many a one in her circumstances would have been, a man like Naaman—"a great man [we are told] with his master the King, and exceedingly honourable"—would have paid slight heed to such a proposal. But he heeded it and acted upon it, and it ended in procuring for the Syrian general the cure of his leprosy, and, along with this grace, far greater spiritual graces.

This part of the sacred narrative, this influence exercised by the Hebrew servant-maid in that heathen household, finds a close parallel in many a family circle down to our own day. I am not thinking now of Catholic families, and how much, especially for the children of the household, depends on the virtue and purity of our domestic servants; but I have in my mind the great influence which Catholics in menial positions may, if sincere and devoted Catholics, exercise over the Protestant families which they serve.

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This is chiefly to be looked for in countries where there is less political prejudice, less prejudice of race and caste, than there is in Ireland; in England, for instance, and especially in the United States. Yet even out of the comparatively small number of the higher classes of society who have in Ireland been converted from Protestantism, I am able to recall two instances in two different parts of the country, where many members of two distinguished families were converted to the Catholic faith; and in each of the two cases God made great use of such humble means as I am referring to. I hope there will be no indiscretion in blessing God for the grace of faith bestowed on many members of the family of Ross-of-Bladensburg and the De Veres.

However, to go back from Rostrevor and Adare to Syria and some two thousand years ago, Naaman went to his royal master—for he, too, had a master—and craved leave to make the proposed pilgrimage to the prophet in Israel. Then he departed, taking with him ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of costly raiment, and a letter of recommendation from his King to the King of Israel.

Little good could kings do for him. If he had to trust to the King of Israel, he would have returned as he went. Indeed, he was very near doing so, even as it was. For when the prophet merely sent a message to him, "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health, and thou shalt be

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clean"—Naaman felt angry, and was turning away, saying: "I thought he would have come out to me, and, standing, would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them and be made clean?" For it is said that even in our day Damascus boasts of having a better water supply than any other city of the East.

Now, are not this language and conduct of the Syrian general very natural and very unsupernatural? And is not this very like the manner in which we are sometimes inclined to speak and act with regard to the affairs of our souls? We wish God to answer our prayers in some particular way, and we are disappointed if He chooses some other way. But our only chance is to do as Naaman did on second thoughts, when his servants remonstrated with him most sensibly: "'If the prophet had bidden thee to do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it. How much rather what he now hath said to thee—Wash and thou shalt be clean?' Then he went down and washed in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored and he was made clean."

Again we detect in Naaman qualities that fitted him to receive God's bounty. He was not like the nine lepers, but like the tenth who came back to give thanks. "And, returning to the man of God with

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all his train, he came and stood before him and said: 'In truth I know there is no other God in all the earth but only in Israel'."

Thus did Naaman profess his faith openly. In the hearing of all his retinue he pledged himself to persevere; and, foreseeing certain difficulties from his position in the King's court, he asks from the prophet instructions as how he is to act. In all this fervour and manly sincerity do we not find additional reasons why, "while there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the Prophet, none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian"?

We must omit some very striking incidents which follow: for this is enough for our present purpose. And our purpose is not to seek here any sanction for religious rights and ceremonies, or to discover in this sevenfold washing in the Jordan a type of the Sacrament wherein our souls are washed in the river of the Precious Blood, and cleansed from the seven deadly sins, till they regain the purity of childhood, as the leprous flesh of the Syrian became like the flesh of a child. This is not our purpose, but to draw two practical lessons besides those which may have been already suggested, as we went over the simple incidents of this Old Testament story.

One of the most obvious lessons is drawn from the application which our Lord Himself made of the miracle to rebuke the incredulity of His own people of Nazareth. This makes it a warning to us all not to trust to any circumstances, however favourable, of

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country or race or family or religion or vocation. None of all these things, however desirable as helps or safeguards, can sanctify or save us without our own humble, earnest, generous and persevering co-operation with God's almighty and all-merciful grace.

But a still more special and practical moral to be drawn from this meditation on the healing of Naaman is, the importance of obeying God's will and attending to every indication of God's good pleasure, not only in great things but in small. "If the prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, surely thou wouldst have done it. How much rather what he hath now said to thee."

Of course, as regards both good and evil, there is such a thing as the distinction between small and great. For instance, mortal and venial sin. That distinction is so merciful, so reasonable, so necessary, that it is hard to believe that heresy can seriously deny it. And yet, though it may seem to run counter to this, there is truth in the remark of one whom it is hardly proper to quote here, for he is not a saint, but only a duke. The author of a thoughtful work, called "The Reign of Law," says that "precisely in proportion to the high qualities of any given mind—in proportion to its keen insight into the causes and tendencies of things and its appreciation of truth and righteousness [and the Duke of Argyll might here say plainly in proportion to its increase in the love and knowledge of God]—in the same proportion

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will the distinction vanish in its eyes between things very bad and things only a little bad ".

No, the distinction cannot really vanish; but we must grow so zealous for God, our wills must be conformed so completely to His will, that we shall cease more and more to pause and deliberate, to weigh and measure, but shall, as far as possible, instantly and instinctively shrink from everything that in any degree displeases Him. That is what we must tend to, aim at, struggle for. We must not presume to make any conditions or stipulations with God, but accept His will unconditionally, both as regards what we are to suffer for Him and what we are to do for Him and what we are for His sake to avoid.

This will add great worth to the small duties and small trials of our everyday lives. If not God's prophet, but God Himself, were to bid us to do some great thing, surely we should do it. Let us prove this by doing the little things that He does ask from us day by day and hour by hour. When a hard trial comes, it is so manifest a share of the cross that we fly at once to Calvary, and soon we are resigned and even happy. But the trivial annoyances, the mosquito-bites of life, these worry and fret us without giving us the pleasing consciousness that we are exhibiting heroic patience, that we are martyrs. To listen with more than patience to a dull story and to smile intelligently at the proper places—to give up some little pet plan or employment of our own, and to enter with zest into the plans of others—here we

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have opportunities, all between ourselves and God, for displaying much genuine virtuè, courage, self-sacrifice, etc., etc. These are "the little things" of Father Faber's rhyme, that "like little wings waft little souls to heaven". "He who despises small things shall fall by little and little; and he who is faithful over a few things shall be placed over many thing sand shall enter into the joy of his Lord."

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ON MAKING MELODY IN OUR HEARTS TO THE LORD.

EVEN in the writings of St. Paul himself—and if not there, where else could there be?—there are few passages more beautiful with both a human and a divine beauty, than the fifth chapter of the Epistle which he, the last and in many respects greatest of the Apostles, addressed to the Christians of Ephesus. After warning them to "redeem the time for the days are evil," he goes on to exhort them thus: "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father."

Those last words, "giving thanks always for all things"—yes, for all things, both good and bad, as we say—might be dwelt upon with great profit; but the words I wish to fix now in your heart, dear reader, and in my own, are those earlier words, "Making melody in your hearts to the Lord". What is this melody of the heart? What is this sweet music which makes itself heard in Heaven, and reaches even to the Heart of God? The preceding

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words of the Epistle show that it consists in holy prayers and aspirations, going on constantly between our hearts and heaven, or rather in such an habitual state of the heart and mind and conscience, as will prompt us naturally to break out into spoken or unspoken words of love and praise and thanks to God.

This presupposes, however, the removal from our hearts of whatever is discordant, whatever might be ever so little offensive to God; and therefore, if we would obey the exhortation of the Apostle and make melody in our hearts to the Lord, we must first empty out from these hearts of ours all that is evil—sin, and everything that turns us in the direction of sin; and, as bad deeds must for the present be considered impossible, in one that is yearning for the intimate friendship of God, the text upon which we are meditating invites us in the first instance to wage war against all that is evil in thought. Bad thoughts repelled at their first approach, expelled if they have already effected an entrance; good thoughts fostered and cherished, and, when occasion offers, embodied in the words and deeds that are due to God above us, and to His poor creatures round us: this is to "make melody in our hearts to the Lord".

Let us then at least desire earnestly to realize in our hearts this ideal of St. Paul. For surely we have no right to hold ourselves excluded from the ranks of those to whom the great Apostle addressed this appeal. The words were written originally to the infant Church of Ephesus, just torn away from

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the blighting spell of Paganism; how much more do they come home to us who live in the full light of Christianity, heirs of the saints, heirs of all Christian ages!

And yet, the first thing that strikes us in turning our minds to the subject, is the contrast (is it not?) between this lofty, spiritual ideal, and the commonplace reality of so many hearts that call themselves Christian. The vulgarity of human life is one of its mysteries, side by side with its awful sublimity. Thinking beings, capable of so much that is high and noble, placed here for a few years of mortal life between two extremities, the nothingness from which we were drawn, and the unending existence that is before us—how dare we, even for one moment, use our eyes, our tongues, our minds, our memories, any of our senses and faculties, for any purpose displeasing to the infinite majesty of God our Maker and Master and Lord?

This thought of God, as it is the strongest safeguard against any other evil temptations, so it is peculiarly and in a very emphatic sense the sovereign security against all danger from bad thoughts, especially such thoughts as are generally indicated by that term. There are of course very many other bad thoughts besides those that are connected with the vice which St. Paul in another place says ought not to be even named amongst Christians, but that class of bad thoughts is particularly loathsome and dangerous. It may seem even dangerous to think of

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them now. This is, indeed, one of those subjects which it is difficult to discuss in a miscellaneous gathering of souls, so much depends practically on the circumstances and dispositions of each individual soul. The same sunshine which melts the ice dries up and hardens mud; and the admonition which is useful for one person, may be injurious to another. Some are too scrupulous, and some are not nearly scrupulous enough. And, as regards the present point, there are souls that need to be awakened to a sense of the sinfulness of sins of thought, while there are souls that need rather to be consoled and reassured as to the harmless, and more than harmless, nature of thoughts which they fear to be sins.

However, it can do nobody any harm to remind ourselves that bad thoughts, when really bad and really wilful, are sins, and may be great sins. See in what terrible company they are placed by our Lord Himself, in the fifteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. "Out of the heart go forth bad thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies." The most fearful crimes begin in thought. But even if they never led to outward deeds, they are bad and wicked in themselves. Human law does not take cognizance of mere thoughts. *De internis non judicat prætor.* Human law requires overt acts to prove a criminal intent. But the Divine law takes heed of the thoughts and desires of the soul, even if they remain for ever mere thoughts and desires. For these are not beyond the cognizance of the Divine Lawgiver. Yes, God reads

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the heart, God looks to the heart, God alone can read the heart. Some one (Young's "Night Thoughts") has said that God has reserved for Himself "that hideous sight, a naked human heart". Thank God, it is not always a hideous sight; but, hideous or beautiful, it is reserved for God's all-seeing eye. "All things are naked to His eyes (His only), even our most secret thoughts and actions."

Yes, God reads the heart. His appeal is still, as it was of old under a sterner dispensation: "Child, give Me thy heart". The Kingdom of God is within us. He wishes to reign in each human heart, as on His throne. In our hearts, in our thoughts, in the merely internal acts of the soul, we can greatly please or displease the great God who made us, who sustains us, who watches over us, who will judge us.

Jesus, who will be our Judge, more than once denounced emphatically the sins that go no farther than the heart; and He drew in this respect a marked contrast between His own new Christian law, and the old Jewish law, at least as interpreted and practised by the Pharisees. For, in reality, even in the Old Law, sins of thought were clearly condemned. The first chapter of the Book of Wisdom says: *Perversæ cogitationes separant a Deo*—"Wicked thoughts separate from God"; and the fifteenth chapter of Proverbs calls them the abomination of the Lord. In later Christian times, St. Jerome gives the plain reason: *Hoc cogitare nefas est quod crimen est facere*—"It is wrong to think of that which it is a crime to do".

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Nay, there can be here the full guilt of mortal sin, when the three conditions of a mortally sinful deed are present: first, grievous sinfulness in the matter itself concerned; secondly, full and deliberate advertence on the part of the understanding; and, thirdly, on the part of the will, full and deliberate consent. No doubt, to carry out the thought into action involves generally greater malice, greater perseverance in malice, greater difficulty in repenting and atoning, and it also involves often scandal and many additional evils; but still the real guilt is in the soul's consent to what is evil. *Omnis decor ab intus.* All glory is from within—and so also are all foulness and sin. Deeds begin with thoughts.

All that has been said about the manner of dealing with certain thoughts that arise within us, supposes that the thoughts in question are really sinful; whereas what seems to us a bad thought may in reality not be a sin at all for us, but rather the source of great merit. Here the Tempter, against his will, often carries out the Gospel maxim and does good to them that hate him.

It is in this matter particularly that the admonition is urged upon us to distinguish between temptation and sin. Some commit sin actually, because they grow disheartened through imagining that they have already committed sin, when in reality they have only been tempted to sin. Where there is struggle, reluctance, regret, *there* there is good reason to hope that the will is not in any way an accom-

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plice, but that such thoughts only try our fidelity and are the occasion of merit.

It is indeed a great comfort to think that in the secrecy of the soul, where no one is present but God —on that battlefield where God is the only spectator —we even there revolt with horror from everything that bears the trace of evil, wishing earnestly and resolving firmly to keep our souls unsullied beneath the all-pure and all-seeing eye of God, in order (as a French poet makes a little child say to God) that we may be able to smile when we look at one another, God and I.

Afin que nous puissions sourire
En nous regardant tous deux.

Nor is it enough to frighten us, at least not very seriously, when there seems to be a sort of treachery, almost an incipient complicity, on the part of the will, an uneasy interest in what is bad, even an initial pleasure. Some temptations would not be temptations, were this beginning of pleasure absent. But this first involuntary suggestion of delectation is not consent; it may be nothing more than the mere gravitation of our corrupt nature towards what is evil. This may humble us, sadden us a little, but must not dishearten or frighten us. To say the same thing over again, there must, for grievous guilt, be grievously sinful matter, full advertence to its grievous sinfulness, and then full consent.

Please God, we shall never again fulfil all these conditions, but rather entitle ourselves to a share in

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the consolation given by one of the old Fathers of the Desert to his youthful disciple: "When the devil plies you with bad thoughts, my son, it is a sign that he has tried to bring you into bad deeds, and has failed". "But, Father, I have bad memories." "These are but ghosts," replied the old man; "fear not the dead, but the living."

No doubt those ghosts are sometimes hard to lay, and it is not any spiritual writer or any Saint, but only a pure-minded poet who gives this turn to our Lord's admonition, "Let the dead past bury its dead". The Holy Ghost, on the contrary, warns us not to be without solicitude, even for forgiven sin—that is, for sin of which we have earned a right to hope that we have through God's mercy obtained forgiveness; for the surest hope is, after all, only hope, and does not exclude a loving, trustful fear.

The proper degree of attention to pay to these seemingly conflicting counsels, the proper mingling of hope and fear in the daily warfare of the soul, is one of the most difficult practical problems of our spiritual life; and one peculiarly perplexing phase of this problem is the proper treatment that we are to use with regard to the thoughts that may disturb our souls.

That advice, however, is suitable for all which Thomas à Kempis gives in the form of a hexameter from some Latin poet: *Principiis obsta; sero medicina paratur*—"Withstand the beginnings: after remedies come too late". Nay, we must go even farther back.

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we must begin earlier than the beginning of the temptation. The best cure for bad thoughts is not to have them at all; I mean, of course, that we must be beforehand with evil suggestions of all sorts, forestall them, prevent them (both in the original and the usual senses of that verb). We must leave no room for them. *Nolite locum dare diabolo.* We must live in such a manner, we must exercise such vigilance over our hearts and minds, we must shun all the sources of temptation so carefully, we must give ourselves over to the duties and the proper pleasures of our state of life so thoroughly, our lives and our hearts must be so full of what is holy, or at least wholesome, that no room will be left for the dreary allurements of evil. There are some who, by a sort of hereditary instinct, by healthy associations, by careful and watchful training, by the pure and elevating atmosphere of a happy Christian home, by the possession or the acquisition of wholesome tastes, by the engrossing duties of a busy and useful life, are made impervious to vile and grovelling influences. Such we must be, if not by nature, then by grace. But along with the supernatural strength of grace we must use natural means according to our natural dispositions, filling our minds especially, for use in vacant moments, with good thoughts and good words.

Yes, words. We cannot always command our thoughts and feelings directly; but we can command words, and to a certain extent the thoughts and feelings which these words express, and, by expressing,

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tend to excite in those who utter them. These words need not always take the form of what are called ejaculations. Holy prayers of this brief, pithy kind, and, above all, and through all, the thought of the presence of God, are of course the sovereign remedies for evil thoughts; but practically it is true that merely worldly things, innocent, but with nothing of the supernatural about them—news, business, proper amusement—are very often the best safeguards against these dangers. "The devil still some mischief finds for idle hands to do," and he is equally ready to cater for the mind that lets idle thoughts run away with it. We must leave no room for them, but let us have favourite trains of thought to fall back upon, especially holy aspirations that spring to our lips of their own accord by a blessed mechanical routine.

Happy are they who, while thus

> Plying their daily task with busier feet,
> Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat,

are at the same time practising for heaven, rehearsing their part for heaven, forestalling the life of heaven; for surely one of the occupations of the blessed in heaven will be to "speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and canticles, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord".

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THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

GOD is near. All the things that we dare to say about God need to be raised above the weakness and narrowness of our poor human words in order to be true of God. Even this, *God is near*, is less than the truth. Things are near when they are separated by only a small space; and in this sense God cannot be merely near, He is more than near. Yet St. Paul uses those three little words, *Prope est Dominus*, as a sufficient sanction for the sublime code of virtue which he inculcates on his Christian converts in their first fervour. "Let your modesty be known to all men: the Lord is nigh."

"The Lord is nigh." God's nearness to us, the presence of God, is motive enough for the practice of modesty and of every Christian virtue. Yes, practical faith in the presence of that Almighty God who made us and who will judge us, is one of the most powerful motives urging us on to all that is good, one of the most powerful restraining influences to keep us back from everything that is evil. Nay, we might speak more boldly and call it absolutely the most powerful of all motives: for every other supernatural

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motive depends for its efficacy upon this, and this one motive may be said to include every other.

No doubt, when one is insisting on any special point like this, one is always prone, in describing its importance, to use superlatives, which very properly are received with suspicion. A lawyer, for instance, does not expect to be taken quite literally when he assures a jury that never before in the entire course of his professional experience has he been more profoundly impressed with the justice of any cause entrusted to his feeble advocacy than he is on the present occasion. Even preachers and spiritual writers may unwittingly come under the influence of this natural feeling which attaches undue weight to the subject that for the time engrosses one's attention. But there is none even of this allowable exaggeration in saying that no point of our spiritual life can be more important, no means of sanctification can be more easy and more efficacious, no supernatural truth can be more fruitful in its results on the soul, than the abiding sense of the presence of God.

Let us, then, with all the faith, hope, charity, and contrition, of which our souls, such as we have made them, are capable, renew our belief in this plain, grand, fundamental dogma, that the almighty and everlasting God, Creator and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, of angels and men, is present everywhere and always; that, as His eternity embraces in itself all the fleeting moments of our

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finite time, so His Divine immensity contains supereminently and transcendently all our relations of place and space; that He is nearer to us, more intimately joined to us, than we are to our own souls; for, as St. Paul told the men of Athens, "He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and are".

God therefore is present everywhere, not merely by His knowledge of what takes place everywhere, or as a King is present by his authority in every part of his kingdom. He is present everywhere as that King is present in the palace which he inhabits or on the throne on which he sits—as He is present to those on whom His eye falls or to whom His voice reaches. In all these meanings and manners, and in ways inconceivably closer and more intimate, God is really and necessarily present in every part of the universe which He has drawn out of nothing and which He maintains in existence at every instant—present to all His creatures, present in all His creatures, with all His infinite attributes, by essence as well as by knowledge and power.

Reason itself goes far to tell us that all this must be so, and faith more plainly says that so it is. "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?" these are the inspired words of God Himself who puts them on the lips of the creature addressing his Divine Creator —"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art

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present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me. And I said: Perhaps darkness shall cover me . . . but darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day" (Psalm CXXXVIII. 7-12).

This illustration which the Royal Psalmist here draws from the light of day is the first which occurs to us all when we strive to realize dimly and afar off this truth of the ubiquity, the immensity, the universal presence of God. "Simple as light is His nature"—so the Christian slave tries to explain this doctrine to Fabiola in Cardinal Wiseman's well-known tale which takes its name from hers, and which, though a mere fiction, is in its subject and in its authorship sacred enough to be quoted here—"simple as light is His nature, one and the same everywhere, indivisible, undefilable, penetrating yet diffusive, ubiquitous and unlimited. He existed long before there was any beginning; He will exist after all ending has ceased. Power, wisdom, goodness, love—justice, too, and unerring judgment—belong to Him by His nature, and are as unlimited and unrestrained as it. He alone can create, He alone preserve, He alone destroy."[1]

Syra goes on—and this is the part which bears more directly on our subject—she goes on to tell her young mistress that to watch and note the thoughts

[1] "Fabiola," chap. XVI.

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and actions of all His creatures is no toil or trouble for this infinite and almighty Being, far less than for the sun to light up with his rays the waters of the stream that was running beside them, down to the very pebbles on its bed. Well might the Roman lady, who had hitherto been a pagan, exclaim with a shudder: "What an awful idea that one has never been alone, has never had a wish to oneself, has never held a single thought in secret, has never hidden the most foolish fancy of a proud or childish brain from the observation of One who knows no imperfection! Terrible thought, that one is living under the steady gaze of an all-seeing Eye, of which the sun is but a shadow, for *he* enters not the soul!"

One who really lived at the time in which Cardinal Wiseman has laid his story—which will be read when his graver treatises are neglected—the early Christian apologist Athenagoras thought that the mere statement of our belief on this point was a sufficient refutation of certain atrocious charges brought against the Christians. "We Christians"—he said to the Emperors Antoninus and Commodus—"we Christians believe and know that God night and day is present not only to all our actions, but to all our words and thoughts, and that He sees the things which lie hidden in our hearts." And hence he dares to draw the conclusion that men who believe all this could not commit, even in thought, such abominable crimes as their heathen slanderers laid to their charge.

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Alas, it is rash to argue from faith to practice. God forbid that the real faith of our souls on this point and on many other points should be judged by our external conduct or even by our secret thoughts and feelings. But the difference between the two, the contrast between belief and conduct, can only be accounted for by the coldness of our faith and by our miserable weakness, stupidity, and cowardice. The saints were saints because they believed what we believed, and acted as if they believed it, whereas *we* live or have often lived as if we could, at least at certain times, hide ourselves from God's sight, or as if God could overlook or forget what He sees.

The sinner who carries this forgetfulness of God's presence to the extent of freely committing grievous sins is practically a pagan, vastly worse for the time being than such enlightened pagans as Seneca (for instance), with his wise advice that we should treat with men as if God saw all, and treat with God as if men saw all. This last suggestion about using the thought or imagination of the presence of our fellow-creatures as an incentive to proper dealing with God is, I think, a very useful one and might be profitably developed. But this would lead us away from our present thesis which may be further supported by the authority of another enlightened pagan, one of the two greatest orators of classical antiquity.

Besides being an orator, Cicero wished to be a philosopher, and in one of his philosophical treatises he tells us of a certain man called Gyges who possessed

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a ring of such marvellous power that, when placed on a certain finger, it rendered him invisible. By means of this ring he committed many crimes with perfect impunity, murdered his King, and made himself the founder of a new line of the Kings of Lydia. Even Cicero, poor heathen as he was, says that a true philosopher, possessing such a ring, would not use it for the purpose of committing crimes with impunity, because for him it would not be enough to escape detection, since the rule of his actions is not the opinion of men but the moral fitness or unfitness of each act.

We who are not groping about in the dark but living in the light—we, thanks be to God, have a more efficacious principle to restrain us from evil than any abstract notion of the moral fitness of things. We deny the hypothesis. No Gyges' ring can render any one invisible to the eye of God. We have never for one instant been hidden from that Eye since we first drew the breath of life. Every beating of our hearts, every passing thought and feeling, has been seen and marked by God. Every one of us can say and could have said at any moment of our past lives: "God is at this moment looking at me as if I were alone in the world". It is a terrible insensibility, want of feeling and want of reason, not to be ashamed and afraid to do in God's presence what we should be ashamed and afraid to do in the presence of our fellow-creatures.

"If you be determined to commit sin," says St.

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Augustine, "seek first a place where God will not see you and then do what you please." And this saying of St. Augustine the Abbot Paphnutius reduced to action in order to convert a sinner of Alexandria called Thais, who was dragging many souls to hell. He pretended to ask for a very secret chamber where no one could discover them; and she showed him one. "Not secret enough," he said. Then she opened an inner room, and another and another, each more secret than the preceding one and more securely locked and guarded. But, praying as he must have prayed before daring to use such an expedient, God enabled him to make the wretched sinner feel that in the most secret of those secret places God saw her. The Divine grace struck her powerfully, and she resolutely tore herself away from her wicked life. For three years Thais fasted on bread and water, praying and weeping; and yet, being forbidden by Paphnutius to pronounce with her polluted lips the sacred name of God, her prayer was only: "O Thou who hast made me, have mercy on me!" After three years of such penance she was found worthy of the sight of God in heaven, the thought of whose unseen presence on earth had startled her out of her sinful life and made her a saint.

Holy as the book is from which this incident is taken, "The Lives of the Saints," it would be better, if proof were needed for this efficacy of the thought of the Presence of God, to seek for proof in the holiest book of all, God's own inspired Word. In

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the Old and the New Testament the eye of God, the sight of God, are appealed to as an infallible remedy for sin, as the securest safeguard against temptation, as the most potent stimulus to virtue.

For instance, in the 23rd chapter of Ecclesiasticus, the Holy Ghost speaking through the son of Sirach denounces the impious folly of "the man who sins in secret, despising his own soul and saying: Who seeth me? Darkness compasses me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me: whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sins. And he understandeth not that the Lord seeth all things, and he knoweth not that His eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts. For all things were known to the Lord God before they were created; so also, after they were perfected, He beholdeth all things."

The prophet Ezechiel also, when the hand of the Lord God fell upon him, lifted up his eyes towards the way of the north; and God said to him: "Surely thou seest, O son of man, what abominations the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, for they say: The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth". And the prophet falls on his face and cries out (IX. 8), "Alas, alas, alas, O Lord God, will Thou, then, destroy all the remnant of Israel by pouring out Thy fury upon Jerusalem?" And God said once more to the prophet: "The

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iniquity of the house of Israel and of Juda is exceeding great, and the land is filled with blood, and the city is filled with perverseness". [And why? The self-same reason over again.] "For they have said: The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not."

Yes, the cry of the sinful heart then and now and at all times is, *the Lord seeth not;* but the cry of the pure heart, and the cry of the sinful heart that wishes to become pure, is, *Dominus videt,* "The Lord sees". This word, this thought, quells the tumult of passion, breaks the wicked spell of temptation, and makes malignant and persistent sin impossible. Even the vicarious presence of God, as it might be called—the presence of some of His poor creatures, those especially who mirror least dimly for us some of His Divine attributes—their presence, nay the mere thought of them, can vanquish the powers of evil and hold the enemy at bay. But none of God's creatures can be near to us in the way in which God is near. The nearest is far off. We can hide from them, but we cannot hide from God. *Dio ed io.* Should we be willing that those whom we love and revere should read our hearts at all times as God reads them? We bless God for having jealously reserved this to Himself—*Deus intuetur cor*—but, on this point more than all, the contrast between creed and conduct has often been mean, dastardly, blasphemous.

We must not, however, think of the presence of

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God as merely a safeguard against evil but also as an incentive to good. We may venture to introduce this branch of the subject by taking an illustration from an incident in the life of the famous actor, Edmund Kean.[1] At the outset of his career, performing in

[1] My authority for this anecdote is the following scrap from some old newspaper:—

"When the curtain drew up," Kean began, "I saw a wretched house. A few people in the pit and gallery, and three persons in the boxes, showed the quantity of attraction that we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting. He was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best. The strange man did not applaud; but his looks told me that he was pleased. After the play I went into the dressing-room [this was under the stage] to change my dress for 'The Savage,' so that I could hear every word that was said overhead. I heard a gentleman (who I suppose was the gentleman of the stage-box) ask Lee the name of the performer who played the principal character. 'Oh,' answered Lee, 'his name is Kean—a wonderful clever fellow; a great little man. He's going to London. He has got an engagement from Mr. Whitbread; a great man, sir.' 'Indeed!' replied the gentleman, 'I am glad to hear it. He is certainly very clever; but he is very small.' 'His mind is large; no matter for his height,' returned Lee to this. By this time I was dressed for 'The Savage,' and I therefore mounted up to the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my play, observing, 'Your manager says that you are engaged for London?' 'I am offered a trial,' said I, 'and if I succeed, I understand I am to be engaged.' 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'will you breakfast with me in the morning? I am at the Royal Hotel. I shall be glad to speak to you. My name is Arnold; I am the manager at Drury-lane Theatre.' I staggered as if I had been shot. My acting in 'The Savage' was done for. However I stumbled

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some country town, the young man was disheartened one evening by perceiving that the audience was miserably scanty—a few people in the pit and only three persons in the boxes. Nevertheless, having the true spirit of his vocation (such as it was), he did his best. And it was well for him that he did so; for one of the three spectators in the boxes was the manager of the principal London theatre, whose appreciation of the young actor's talent, as displayed in that evening's performance, led at once to a London engagement and raised Edmund Kean soon to fame and fortune.

You see the application, dear reader. How foolish to look for the applause of the ignorant and the vulgar crowd instead of trying to deserve the approval of those who are really competent judges of excellence! So it is in human things; but the folly of follies is not to strive earnestly to please the Supreme Judge whose eye is upon us always. God sees and knows

through the part, and—here I am." After finishing his story he could think and talk of nothing but the approaching interview with the London manager. Morning arrived, and Kean (after dressing himself 'as respectably as he could,' says our information) repaired to the hotel for breakfast. He was received graciously, and after some conversation as to his experience on the stage, his cast of characters, etc. (which occupied the intervals of the meal), he was finally engaged by Mr. Arnold on behalf of Drury-lane Theatre for a term of three years, at a salary of eight, nine, and ten pounds per week for each successive year, and he was to have 'six trial parts'. In two hours from the time of his leaving home, he returned to his wife with the above information. He seemed half out of his senses with delight."

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everything we do, and think, and feel, and suffer, and He knows our spirit and our motives; He marks everything and forgets nothing. How is it possible that we should ever lose sight of this? And how is it possible that, remembering this, we should ever deliberately, I will not say commit sin, but even be slothful and careless about doing the things on which God's Eye will rest with pleasure?

This abiding sense of the Divine presence was the very recipe for acquiring perfection proposed by God Himself many centuries before the Incarnate Son of God had issued that strange command: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect". Two thousand years earlier than that precept of the Redeemer, the Almighty had said to the patriarch Abraham: *Ego Deus omnipotens, ambula coram me et esto perfectus.* "I am the omnipotent God: walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. XVII. 1). And if after this Divine authority it were lawful to cite a mere creature, we have the last words of a man so holy and so learned as St. Thomas Aquinas. When he was dying at Fossa Nova, one of the monks asked him what was the best means of being always faithful to grace. The departing Saint replied: "Be assured that he who shall always walk faithfully in God's presence, always ready to give to God an account of all his actions, shall never be separated from God by consenting to sin". Long before St. Thomas, St. Ephrem had said: "Always keep God in remembrance, and your soul will become a heaven". For

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what is Heaven but the house of God, the home of holiness and peace and praise and prayer, where there is neither sin nor sorrow? And all this is in due measure verified in the soul that keeps God in remembrance.

This holy exercise of the presence of God consists chiefly in a simple and loving remembrance of God as present within us—an act of faith and charity without any straining of the mind or any effort of the imagination. It need not interfere—quite the contrary—with any of the labours or lawful pleasures of ordinary life. The only thing it interferes with is sin. The thought of God's presence must not check the hearty laugh of innocent mirth. The presence of a kind and loving parent does not sadden good children but makes them happier. So must *we* feel under the watchful but loving eye of our Father who is in Heaven. Even in this vale of tears, we must be the happy children of the one holy Catholic Church, the true Mother of souls, who teaches us that joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, who bids us "delight in the Lord" with the Psalmist, and imitate the Psalmist also when he says (Ps. LXXVI. 4): "My soul refused to be comforted—I was mindful of God and was delighted". Nay, the union between God's presence and joy of heart is put forth in the very passage which has set us meditating on the subject; for there St. Paul, while reminding us that the Lord is nigh, cries out in the same breath: "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say to you, rejoice!"

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An easy and profitable way of recalling the presence of God is the practice of holy aspirations—to try and sprinkle short and fervent ejaculations over our day, as the asperges sprinkles the drops of holy water over the heads of the congregation kneeling before Mass in some holy country chapel. To raise the soul quietly, and with or without a motion of the lips to say in our hearts, "O my God!"—it ought not to be very hard for us to do as much as this sometimes during the course of the day; and even this would remind us very effectually of God's holy presence.

Or (better still) we might fix in our minds the favourite ejaculations of some saints, such as that which we heard a few moments ago from the lips of the penitent Thais: "O Thou who hast made me, have mercy on me!"—or else St. Francis of Assisi with his *Deus meus et omnia*, "My God and my all!" —or those humble words which pleased our Lord greatly in the Gospel: "I believe, O Lord!—help my unbelief"—or finally, that other prayer which pleased our Lord still more: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner".

A gentle turning of the mind and heart to God, even if unaccompanied by any articulate sigh, such as one of these ejaculations, will calm us and strengthen us, and enable us to go on more cheerfully and more steadily with any duty that occupies us at the moment. Thus shall we keep the mind filled with pure and elevating thoughts and feelings,

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so as to leave no room for the frivolous, much less the filthy and the base.

May it be so with all of us, dear readers. May all our actions, even the most trivial and the most hidden, and all our words and all our thoughts and our whole hearts and lives, be henceforth more worthy than they have often been in the past of rational beings with immortal souls, living, and knowing that we live, and remembering habitually that we live, at every instant in the presence of God.

Thee, O my God, as present I adore,
And, offering Thee my heart, Thy help implore,
Resolving never to offend Thee more.

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THE PRESENCE OF MAN.

THE presence of God is a powerful motive to urge us to be at every moment, and to do at every moment what we ought to be and ought to do. "God sees me," ought to be a sufficient safeguard against all temptation. But, alas! we can come to forget God's nearness, to feel and act as if He were far away. How dreadful a thing it is to act in God's presence in a way that we should be ashamed of if one of God's poor creatures were present! The two following incidents resemble each other, and both of them illustrate the foregoing remarks.

About the middle of the last century, the Senior Dean of Maynooth College was the Rev. Myles Gaffney, D.D. He was a white-haired, rosy-cheeked little man, with a stoop, who, to the youthful students, seemed very old: yet, after he had resigned his office and spent several years more as a Jesuit (his younger brother, the well-remembered Father John Gaffney, S.J., was his elder brother in religious life), he was only sixty-three years old when he died in 1861, at the end of it all.

One of the means adopted by Dean Gaffney for training in spiritual things the multitude of young

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Levites in his charge was to assemble the students of the Junior House in the Logic Class-hall on Wednesday evenings and discourse to them very conversationally on many things. His stories made these *causeries* very agreeable to his young audience, especially during the first year that they listened to him. One of these stories was about a Catholic servant-maid in a Protestant family, where the mistress had the cruelty and meanness and wickedness to try to undermine and unsettle the faith of the poor girl. One of her horrid insinuations was that priests hypocritically paid homage to the Blessed Eucharist in public, but only when others were looking on. The servant hid herself in a church until it was closed, when she saw the priest after some minutes come in from the sacristy in soutane and stole, kneel down to pray for a time before the altar, and then with deep reverence and recollection remove the Blessed Sacrament to a more secure place for the night. To his surprise, the poor young woman rushed forward, and, throwing herself at his feet, confessed how far she had yielded to the suspicions artfully instilled into her. Happy the priest whose demeanour and whose heart at his most unguarded moments would confirm the faith of such a waverer. The presence of God ought to be enough; but there is force also in a sort of vicarious presence of God, the presence of our sinful fellow-creatures. Let us work and pray in secret as if some of these were watching us.

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There is a certain similarity between the foregoing incident and a fact that Cardinal Mermillod has mentioned as happening to himself in an early part of his brilliant ecclesiastical career. When vicar of Geneva, in Switzerland, he was the occasion of the conversion of a Protestant by simply making a genuflection before the Blessed Sacrament. It was his custom to go every evening and pay a visit to our Lord Jesus Christ in the church. He then trimmed the lamp and locked and securely fastened the outer door, after ascertaining that nobody remained in the church. The inhabitants of Geneva were very bitter, and the clergy took the utmost care to protect the churches for fear of sacrilegious attempts upon the Blessed Eucharist. Father Mermillod then returned to the foot of the altar, made a devout genuflection, and in leaving kissed the ground as a mark of adoration.

One evening, believing himself quite alone, he was in the act of rising after concluding his devotions, when he heard a noise; the confessional door opened, and a lady came out. "What are you doing here at this hour, madam?" "I am a Protestant," she replied, "as you know. I have attended the Lenten services and listened to the instruction which you gave on the Real Presence. I was convinced by your arguments; one doubt alone remained—forgive me for expressing it: 'Does he believe,' I asked myself, 'in what he says?' To convince myself I came here to see if, in secret, you would behave towards the Holy

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Eucharist as one who believed; I was resolved, if I saw your conduct accorded with your teaching, to be converted. I came and I believe. Hear my confession." To-day she is one of the most fervent Catholics in Geneva.

. . . . . .

But that "to-day" is now many a year ago, and we may well be confident that to that lady of Geneva has long since been granted that petition of St. Thomas Aquinas, which may be given in the beautiful translation that I have no hesitation in attributing to Father Henry James Coleridge, S.J., on account of the way he introduced it into "Among the Prophets," in the "Month," forty years ago:—

O Jesus, glorious Lord, whom now these veils enshroud and cover,
One gift alone I covet, I ask this only grace:
That in the light of Paradise, when earthly things are over,
I worship in Thy presence and look upon Thy face.

God grant that our behaviour in our most secret and most unguarded moments may stand this test—as if we were always not only in the presence of God, but in the presence of man.

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THE GREAT COMMANDMENT.

THE written word of God needs the guardianship and guarantee of His living Church; and yet to the pure of heart the Gospel of Jesus Christ almost proves its own divinity. The fragmentary record that has come down to us of the words and actions of our Lord and Saviour during His mortal life stands far apart from all other biographies, from all other accounts, of the lives and writings of the wisest and holiest men. The greatest minds and the purest hearts have meditated deeply on each word and each incident of the life of Jesus, year after year, generation after generation, and the treasures of love and wisdom contained therein can never be exhausted. What strength, what courage, what generous inspirations, have been drawn from such meditations by sincere and earnest souls through all the Christian ages! This moment this blessed influence is at work in many souls who are now going through their earthly probation like me. Let me join them. I will try to live over again one scene in our Lord's life; I will realize as vividly as I can the scene which sets before us our Divine Redeemer answering the test-question proposed to Him by one of the Pharisees (Matt. XXII.

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39): "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" And Jesus at once answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind". And He added: "This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is not upon this second commandment, but upon the first and greatest—the Great Commandment—that I wish to fix my thoughts, and the thoughts of anyone who may ever look upon this page in any stage of its existence. But before settling down to that subject it may be useful to remark that for some people it would seem to be better not to love their neighbour as they love themselves. Some people do not love themselves well, or at least they take a very bad way of showing their love. To squander their hard-earned wages on drink, to lose their money and time and self-respect and character in miserable self-indulgence which almost on the instant punishes itself and turns so-called pleasure into pain; to wreck their homes, and to starve their families; to embitter and destroy their own lives; to contract disease and to hasten their death—this is what drunkards of all kinds, beginners and hardened offenders, secret and scandalous, do for themselves. This is their way of showing their love for themselves, and they are certainly not counselled to bestow upon their neighbours similar marks of affection. Of course the meaning of the Divine precept is that we

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should love our neighbour as ourselves when we really love ourselves in a rational manner. We all desire our own true happiness, though we do not always adopt the best and surest means of obtaining it. We readily forgive ourselves, bear with our own faults and shortcomings, are ingenious in finding out reasons and excuses in our own favour: all this we are ordered to do for our fellow-creatures also.

Yet is not that a far better test that our Lord proposes elsewhere? He does not call it a commandment of the law, but He calls it His own commandment. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." It is the Apostle of Love that has put this precept on record—a precept issued at the most solemn and tender moment, during our Lord's leave-taking on the eve of His death. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John xv. 12).

Ah, *there* indeed is a test that can never fail, a test that is true for ever. *As I have loved you.* Jesus has loved us. He has proved His love. When He wept over the grave of Lazarus, the bystanders said: "See how He loved him!" Jesus shed more than tears for us—He shed His blood.

If, then, this commandment of love was easy when that doctor of the law proposed his question to Jesus —and it *was* easy, for God was always our Father and Creator, the Maker of this beautiful world, and in Him we live and move and have our being; and why, then, should we find it hard to love Him?—

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but it is far easier now, for Jesus has lived for us and died for us since then, and now we know God's love better than ever.

Even if the Son of God had never come on earth in visible form—if Jesus had never died for us, if the world had never been lost, or, being lost, had been redeemed in some other manner: even so we should still have been bound to love with our whole hearts and with our whole souls and with our whole minds the great God who made us, though then He might seem so far away. But He came nearer to us. In the depths of the eternal counsels the Son of God said: "Behold I come". And in the fullness of time He came as the Child of Mary, to live a life of poverty and suffering, and to die a death of agony and shame. He would not only redeem us, but redeem us with the most plenteous redemption amidst all the circumstances and associations best calculated to gain the whole love of all our hearts and souls. Even when He had come among us in mortal flesh, a tear, a sigh would have redeemed the world. But not *thus* would Jesus redeem the world. And if (as St. Paul says) "without shedding of blood there is no remission," even so one drop of His blood would have sufficed to wash away the sins of a thousand worlds.

Deign, O Jesus, pelican of heaven!
Me a sinner in Thy blood to lave,
To a single drop of which 'tis given
All the world from all its sin to save.

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A single drop—but Jesus shed it all. The old fables pretended that the pelican of the wilderness nourished its fledglings by plunging its beak into its own bosom; and hence it is that in one of the Irish Melodies it is said of the children of our own dear country that their hearts

> like the young of the desert bird's nest
> Drink love in each life-drop that flows from her breast.

Far beyond the wildest dream of fable, far above the highest flights of poetry, far beyond all that song or story has told of the devotedness of God's poor creatures towards one another, far beyond the uttermost extravagance of human love is the love of the Heart of Jesus for us. Amongst creatures the most exaggerated expression of a devoted affection is this: "I would pour out the last drop of my heart's blood for your sake". Jesus alone fulfilled this literally when upon Calvary the centurion's spear opened His side at the end, and the last treasure of His Sacred Heart rushed out.

And now, when we think of this great price at which we have been bought, can we refuse to our Lord what was His already? As our Creator, He had a sovereign right to our hearts, to our entire being. To love Him was not only a duty, but a privilege which we might gladly purchase by the fervent service of a lifetime, if God in His goodness did not only allow us but command us to love Him. But Jesus bought us anew, and at a great price. If one of our fellow-creatures had done or could do for us

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a millionth part of what Jesus has done for our sake, our very heart would swoon away with the vain desire to express our gratitude.

Long ago, before Jesus came on earth, the great Emperor Cyrus, in the course of his victories, took captive the wife of Tigranes, King of Armenia, who had just been married. Tigranes went boldly to Cyrus and entreated to be allowed to ransom his young Queen at any cost. "What will you give for her ransom?" "I will give my life for her." He said this with such manifest sincerity that the heart of the conqueror was touched, and he sent them both away to their home with rich gifts. On their way, Tigranes said to his bride: "How noble the Emperor looked!" "I did not see him," she answered; "I had only eyes for him who said he would give his life for me."

Jesus has not merely said this—He has done it. The Good Shepherd has given His life for His flock. Jesus died for each of us. Each of us individually can say as well as St. Paul: "He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me". Each of us is therefore bound to make that stupendous act of faith to which St. John exhorts us by his example: "We have believed in the love of the Lord Jesus". Each of us must strive earnestly to escape that terrible malediction of St. Paul: "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema". And then the sacraments, and above all the Sacrament of His love, that Sacrament of which Robert Southwell, the poet-

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martyr of Queen Elizabeth's time, said: "I marvel not, Lord, that Thou couldst do it, but that thou wouldst do it"; of which St. Bernard said: *Sacramentum altaris est amor amorum;* which Richard of St. Victor could only account for on the principle, *Amor excessibus vivit,* "Love lives on excesses".

And this excess of love—is it not at last to get the poor reward of our heart's love and gratitude? Shall this love that our Redeemer has lavished upon us—shall it be all in vain?

So it has been too often and too long. It must be so no longer. We must try henceforth to give to our Redeemer the full love of our hearts.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. O Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us. May the blessing of the Heart of Jesus and of His Holy Mother, of St. Joseph and our guardian angels, be upon us, and remain with us for ever and ever!

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PREACHING AND PRACTISING.[1]

I DO not know how it goes in other languages; but in this flexible and fluent English language which Providence has allowed to play an important part in the work of our lives, the alliteration adds a certain force to the rebuke—for the words are generally uttered as a rebuke—"Practise what you preach".

Nay, we must practise before we preach. A Doctor of Divinity means strictly one who teaches the Divine science; but the title is intended to guarantee a man as *doctus* rather than as *doctor*, for we are supposed to be learned in what we undertake to teach to a learner.

> O'er wayward childhood would you hold firm rule,
> And sun you in the light of happy faces?
> Love, truth, and patience—these must be your graces,
> And in your own heart let them first keep school.

These lines (probably Coleridge's) are applicable to others besides the teachers of wayward childhood. "Men are but children of a larger growth," and these same graces are needed also in all who would

[1] This little paper and the following one are not addressed to the general reader; but they may suggest to the general reader to pray that poor mortal priests may correspond with the graces of their high vocation.

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teach men the way to heaven; and they must first keep school in the heart of the priest himself.

Priest of God, how are things going on in that interior school? What would be the latest report of a properly qualified inspector? The only properly qualified inspector is God. Dr. Edward Young put the point a little too harshly when the thought one night occurred to him that God has reserved to Himself

That hideous sight, a naked human heart.

But we have it on better authority: *Deus intuetur cor* (1 Kings xvi. 7). "What we are in God's sight, that we are and nothing more," said St. Francis of Assisi; and Cardinal Manning said it over again without adverting to the plagiarism: "We are what we are before God, and nothing else, neither better nor worse".[1]

The thirty-fifth verse of the fifth chapter of St. John (God be praised for the eucharistic chapter that follows it!) describes the Baptist as *Lucerna ardens et lucens*. Is this the source of St. Bernard's admonition to priests which the old Dean of Maynooth College, Dr. Miles Gaffney, used to repeat in his exhortations to the students fifty years ago? *Ardere parum, lucere vanum, ardere et lucere multum.* Holiness without learning is not enough for a priest; learning without holiness would be vanity and ruin;

[1] Half-way through chapter x, "The Value of a Priest's Time," the most useful part of the Cardinal's work, "The Eternal Priesthood".

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but a priest who is both holy and learned will work wonders. The same order of ideas is followed in other texts that have a certain bearing on the present subject. Jesus is said to be *Potens opere et sermone* (Luke XXIV. 19); and again: *Jesus coepit facere et docere* (Acts I. 1), practising what He preached and before He preached it. In the sermon on the Mount He calls His disciples *sal* first and then *lux*, as St. Chrysostom notes, *quia prius est bene vivere quam bene docere.* In the collect of the second Mass on Christmas morning we pray that *In nostro resplendeat opere quod per fidem fulget in mente.* May the truths which faith lights up in our minds shine forth in our works! —just as in the hymn of Tierce we pray:—

Flammescat igne caritas,
Accendat ardor proximos.

The fire of charity must flame up in our hearts before its heat can inflame those around us. The reservoir must be full before it can flow over.

That saying of St. Bernard on which we are dwelling may remind us also of the twofold grace that St. Ignatius always bids us pray for in the last of the preludes of meditation—light for the understanding and fervour for the will, grace to know God's will and, when known, to love it and do it. And again, what is this but the *intellectum illumina, affectum inflamma* of the Church's preparatory prayer before the Divine Office? Father Faber seems to reverse the order when he tells us to go on praying always for

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"love to seek God's glory and light to find it all day long".

This double grace is also the object prayed for in the Collect of the Sunday within the octave of the Epiphany: *Vota, quaesumus, Domine, supplicantis populi coelesti pietate prosequere; ut et quae agenda sunt videant, et ad implenda quae viderint convalescant. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.* "Do Thou, we beseech Thee, O Lord, through Thy heavenly pity fulfil the desires of Thy supplicating people, so that they may not only see the things which ought to be done but grow strong to accomplish them. Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A priest might well make his own of this prayer by changing *populi* into *servuli* and the plural verbs which follow into the singular.

Yes, we must ask for more than light; we must ask for grace to use the light that is given to us. Our cry is not merely the *Rabboni, ut videam* of Bartimeus (Mark x. 51), but *Domine, ut amem, ut faciam!*—not merely to see, but to do and dare. Not Goethe's dying cry, "More light! more light!" but rather, "More love, more love!"

This subject may also be linked with the Spanish inscription painted on the wall of the old mission church of San Carlos at Monterey in Lower California, which was restored a few years ago as a memorial of the centenary of the Franciscan missionary, Father Juniper Serra, one of the pioneers of Catholicity in that wonderful state. "O Heart of Jesus, Thou that

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art always glowing and radiant, inflame and enlighten my heart with Thy Divine love. Angels and saints, help us to praise the Heart of Jesus."

"Glowing and radiant," *ardens et lucens*. This prayer, that comes to us from the far-off Chapel of the Crucifixion near Carmelo Bay, on the shores of the Pacific, may be condensed into the ejaculation which would befit priestly lips: "O Thou who burnest and shinest, make us burn and shine". Grant, O Lord, that we may not only glow with interior heat but may diffuse light and warmth around us. *Fac nos et ardere et lucere.* "Was not our heart burning within us?" (Luke XXIV. 22). "Let your light shine before men" (Matt. v. 16).

This is not quite the meaning of the saying, "Charity begins at home," but it can be deduced from that other old saying, *Nemo dat quod non habet. Qui fecerit et docuerit, hic magnus vocabitur in regno coelorum* (Matt. v. 19). But he who teaches without doing will not be great in heaven, will not be there at all; for the Judge will judge him by his own teaching and will bid him depart. *Ex ore tuo judico te, serve nequam!* (Luke XIX. 22).

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"OPERARIUS INCONFUSIBILIS."

In the second chapter of St. Paul's second Epistle to St. Timothy there is a text which had caught my attention long before I had seen it mentioned somewhere that it was a favourite text of Father Olivaint, the chief of the Jesuit martyrs of the Commune in 1871. It is the fifteenth verse of the chapter, and it runs thus in Latin: "*Sollicite cura te ipsum probabilem exhibere Deo, operarium inconfusibilem, recte tractantem verbum veritatis*".

The word that caught my fancy here and carried the rest with it was *inconfusibilis*. This queer adjective is what the old grammarians thought to make plainer by calling it in Greek ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, what the poet William Cowper calls somewhere a *ne plus*, and what Sir James Murray, in the great Historical Dictionary that is gradually getting printed at Oxford, calls a nonce-word, that is, a word found only once in all extant literature. Certainly in the Scripture Concordance there is for *inconfusibilis* only one single reference, that which I have given, the fifteenth verse of the second chapter of the second Epistle of St. Paul to St. Timothy. "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Could there be a more terse

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or a more pointed admonition than this for a priest or a religious to take home to himself?

Indeed the text might well have a wider application still, the widest possible application; for all men are or ought to be workers, toilers, labourers, operatives, *operarii* of some sort or other; and each in his special work ought to aim at being *inconfusibilis*, "unconfoundable," confusion-proof, irreproachable, able to face the closest inspection without any fear of being put to the blush. A great deal of the household work of domestic servants, a great deal of the work done by contract at the public expense or by private enterprise, a great deal of the results of human labour of every kind, would be more perfect if every detail of it were sure to be examined at the time and on the spot by some competent and incorruptible overseer. Well, such is precisely the case with regard to all the duties of life in all the various vocations of mankind. *Deus videt.* "God sees."

Nothing whatsoever escapes the sight, the inspection, the immediate judgment of God. "What we are in God's sight, *that* we are, and nothing more;" and this word of St. Francis of Assisi, holds true not only of the general result and outcome of life and conduct, but of every detail of our daily life. In all our work and in every part and parcel of it are we *operarii inconfusibiles?* Will the minutest examination bring no blush of shame and confusion to our cheek?

For surely the work that is done directly for God

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ought to be as perfect in its kind as the work that is done immediately for man. The standard of carefulness and diligence that is exacted from the carpenter, the mason, the architect, the lawyer, the physician, is not too high a standard of perfection for the priest and preacher and professor. It is manifest that each of these is bound to strive earnestly, as St. Paul says, "to present himself approved unto God," that is, more literally, worthy of God's approval, *probabilem Deo*, deserving God's approbation, as *operarius inconfusibilis*, a workman who does his work in a thoroughly workmanlike manner—no scamping, no flaw, no fraud, no idling when the eye of the foreman or clerk of works is not upon him.

In one of the reports to the United States Government about the Panama Canal, Chief Engineer Steevens stated that white labour at two dollars and a half a day was in reality far cheaper than what is called Jamaican labour, that is, negroes hired in Jamaica. The negro's work at its best is only equal to a third of the Northern American's; and, besides, one-half of the actual efficiency is lost, we are told, "owing to the deliberate, unceasing and continuous effort,"—this is the rather tautological language of the official report—"owing to the deliberate, unceasing, and continuous effort to do as little as possible". Mr. Steevens concludes that the eighty cents paid to the lazy negro is in reality equivalent to five dollars for eight hours' work—exorbitant wages for unskilled labour.

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"A deliberate and unceasing effort to do as little as possible." It would be shameful if anything resembling such a policy ever at any time was pursued by one of the skilled labourers that the Society of Jesus trains so carefully and at so much cost of time and money to work in the Master's Vineyard. But there might be methods of work, ways of acting, much less atrocious than Jamaican labour, and yet quite bad enough to disentitle a Jesuit to the name and the reward of an *operarius inconfusibilis*.

Operarius. That is the designation placed after a great many names in our domestic catalogues. I remember hearing the remark made that the men after whose names *operarius* stood alone had generally more to do than those with a great many offices tacked on to their names. I don't think this is true. *Scrib. Hist. Dom.* may not involve any very serious responsibility; but it takes plenty of energy, self-denial and perseverance to keep a Sodality in a healthy state; and even *Praef. Biblioth.* means a great deal more of late years than it did "twenty golden years ago" when those syllables followed my own name in the Catalogue.

At any rate, whatever may be printed after our names, we are all of us *operarii*, all labourers, workers. We all have work to do. "Cursed is he who doth the work of God negligently"—or (as another version has it) *fraudulenter*, "fraudulently," "deceitfully". All our work is pre-eminently the work of God. Our work is to fulfil our vocation as members of the

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Society of Jesus. Do we not all remember very vividly the lofty ideal we had before our minds, when God's very special grace not only summoned us to enroll ourselves under the standard of our Lord, but gave us the courage and generosity to obey the summons in spite perhaps of many obstacles? I hardly ever meet in the Divine Office (as in the second psalm of the third nocturn of the Common for Apostles) that verse of Psalm XCVI., *Montes sicut cera fluxerunt a facie Domini*, "the mountains have melted away like wax before the face of the Lord," without being reminded of a certain letter which I wrote at that crisis of my own story, and in which I applied that text to the melting away of difficulties that had seemed to stand in my path. Have we realized our ideal? Perhaps in later stages of our journey we might take to ourselves the tale that is told of a young man who tore himself away from the world with great generosity, but who afterwards fell off sadly from the perfection of his state. His mother, who had meanwhile died a holy death, appeared to him in a vision and reproached him saying: "Was it for this, my son, that you gave yourself and us so much pain by leaving us and bursting through all earthly ties that were or might have been? Did you give yourself to the religious state in order to be only this, nothing better than this?"

Mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.

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"Change but the name, of thee the tale is told." As we have not named any name at all, we may more easily apply the story to ourselves.

Father P. F. was one of the meekest of men, yet I have known him to wax indignant at the thought of men who expected a good deal of consideration to be shown to themselves as members of a religious order, and all this at the very time that these men themselves were helping (this is the good Father's exact phrase) "to fritter away the character of the grand old Society," by doing the work entrusted to them lazily and carelessly, or at least much less solidly than they were capable of doing it if they had proper humility and proper conscientiousness, if they were swayed habitually by a self-denying devotion to duty; if they strove honestly, in every class they taught, every sermon they preached, every meditation they made, every room they swept, every fish they fried—if in every piece of work, great or small, that they were given to do, they strove to prove themselves *operarii inconfusibiles* by turning out their work, each in its kind, as well as they could in a thoroughly workmanlike manner, so that they would have no reason to blush for it or be ashamed of it, even if it were examined there and then by competent judges under whose scrutiny no flaw could escape detection.

Another shrewd old priest used to advise his younger brethren to make a meditation occasionally

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on all the harm they were doing. Every practical meditation indeed touches on this subject; at least our resolutions ought to be in the direction thereof, seeing how much good we can do, and how we may avoid doing harm.

There are many indeed, thanks be to God, for whom such a meditation was never necessary, and who, if they had made it, might well have taken a note like St. John Berchmans' note of his meditation "De Propriis Peccatis" "*Magnam passus sum aridita-tem*". His biographers were greatly edified at this as if it showed the absolute dearth of matter, as if he had no sins to bewail. But was there not in him also as in St. Aloysius, the union of *mira vitae innocentia pari cum pœnitentia?* Why, then, such aridity?

At any rate that would hardly be the proper note for some of us to take after an honest examination of all our work, interior and exterior, our exercises of piety and our exercises of zeal. For the rest of our time, please God, we shall and will—let me use both of these auxiliaries in order to make sure of having the right one—we will and shall, in the various duties of our state, be *operarii inconfusibiles.* This resolution indeed cannot mean very much for old fogeys like me who have contracted that incurable disease which gets its name from a blend of elephantiasis and creeping paralysis and is called creeping septuagin-tiasis. But stalwart youths of fifty or sixty, with the best of their lives still before them, ought to take the

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matter to heart and imagine that St. Paul addresses to them the exhortation that he addressed to St. Timothy: "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed". *Operarius inconfusibilis.*

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WORK.

A SERMON AFTER THE HOLIDAYS.

VACATION is over. Children, both of larger and of smaller growth, must set to work again. Unhappy they who have no work to turn to. More unhappy they who turn from the work that God wants them to be at. Heaven grant that the young folk especially, who are now beginning a new year of school-life, may give themselves to their work with a will. One of the most important functions of school-life is to teach the young how to work. I hope these pages will pass through the hands of many boys and girls in Ireland and elsewhere, who, with the summer glow still vivid on their cheeks and in their hearts, have returned from their seaside holidays fully resolved on doing their work. It has occurred to me, then, that this is a fitting time to urge upon them a few earnest thoughts on this subject, keeping pretty closely to the words spoken many years ago to 400 French boys at the distribution of prizes in the College of Vannes in Brittany. The pupils, in the joyous excitement of the "breaking up," with their fathers, and mothers, and sisters, and little brothers

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looking on, were all waiting for the announcement of the results of the eager competition which had taken place in the various classes during the preceding weeks; but they were not sorry to be kept waiting a little longer by a discourse from Father Felix, who has just begun his famous series of Lenten Conferences at Notre Dame in Paris. Would that the vividness of the scene and the speaker's earnestness and clearness of tone could lend their power to this summary of his thoughts.

. . . . . .

There are many mistaken views nowadays about very elementary subjects; and one that is often misunderstood is the proper notion of *Work*. In talk and in practice people make *action* and *work* mean the same thing, but they are quite distinct. All work is action, but all action is not work. There is a sort of activity, employment, which is a convenient disguise for sloth; and the world is full of people who waste their lives *doing something* in a lazy way that leads to nothing. *Operose nihil agendo.*

What, then, is Work? Work is man's effort against obstacles, it is the struggle with difficulties. When a man wishes to make a fruitful use of his powers, he discovers in his nature a force hostile to the employment of his faculties; before everything great and beautiful he finds a barrier which stops him. To work is to conquer this force, to break through this barrier. The worker is he who advances, who acts, who produces, but all with weari-

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ness of limb, with sweat of brow, if not with sadness of heart. Labour then is pain. I know of course that labour produces joys that sloth is ignorant of, just as self-sacrifice causes delights that are unknown to selfishness. But if joy may spring from labour, it is only the fruit of labour, not labour itself. Such is the imperishable idea of human labour, which all the philosophies and all the revolutions cannot abolish.

Labour is the law of life. Religion shows it to us beside the cradle of the human race, proceeding from man's prevarication and the malediction of God. "Cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life" (Gen. III. 17). And man went forth, bearing away with him the anathema, the inevitable heritage of his posterity. Always and everywhere human nature has preserved with this imperishable memory the unconquerable instinct of this law of labour. Certain false teachers, unable to suppress labour, have dreamed of transforming it. By new schemes of education, labour was to be rendered attractive, man would exercise his arms in pleasant toil, as a musician runs his hand carelessly along the chords, and, without any fatigue for himself, produces for the listener the delights of harmony. Work would thus be only amusement, work would no longer be work. But the world with a melancholy smile of disdain, says to these dreamers: "These men are mocking me. From the first days of my life of sixty centuries, I drag myself on in a weariness which never ceases

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but to begin anew. Such was the law of my youth —*in laboribus a juventute mea*—and I feel that till the evening of my long life, where God awaits me to give me my wages, for me to live is to toil, and to toil is to suffer."

But the most victorious testimony to the law of labour in humanity is the voice of history. In all that is submitted to his empire, man creates everything by his toil, in the material order as in arts, literature, and science. Everywhere you will see the masterpieces of art, poetry, eloquence, receiving from the hand of labour the consecration of immortality. The creations of genius are marked by this sign. The breath of inspiration conceives them and conceives with joy; labour alone brings them forth, and brings them forth in pain. This is the reason why the man of genius, in the creation of his works, is visited in turn by joy and grief, enthusiasm and melancholy. Each cry of admiration responds to one of his sighs; and, looking on his works, he can say to them, as a mother to her infant: "You are the children of my sufferings". Here perhaps is explained the mystery of that profound sympathy which a man cherishes towards all that he has produced. He feels therein, together with the germ of his life, the thrill of his heart's pangs.

If I might here evoke those great men who have done violence to glory and conquered immortality, all would appear before you with an austere splendour, showing, marked on the masterpieces of their genius

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as on their own foreheads, the authentic sign of labour and pain. You would see the immortal honour of ancient eloquence, Demosthenes, struggling with persevering energy and prodigious efforts against the natural defects which seemed to debar him from the triumphs of speech—Demosthenes preparing in a fruitful silence those thunderbolts of eloquence which were to burst over Philip's head, and to go on resounding through the ages with an echo which, instead of growing fainter, swells and deepens with the years. You would see Virgil, whose harmonious song has moved generation after generation with a charm that never palls—Virgil at his last hour, holding his poem in his hand, ready to tear it to pieces, because, after twenty years of obstinate toil, he did not deem it even yet worthy of posterity or of him. You would see Bossuet, whose genius, vast and sublime as an eagle's flight, seems to go beyond the limits of human eloquence—you would see this great man, in his solitude at Meaux, rising five hours before the dawn, and there, alone with his genius and God, in the union of labour and meditation, creating those incomparable masterpieces which leave the attentive student in doubt whether the inspiration of genius or the prodigious efforts of labour have done most for their perfection. You would see, in fine, in another order of things, Francis Xavier, and with him all the apostles who have made for themselves a fruitful paternity by labour and pain, conquering a soul, as Columbus a world, by the tribulations

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of life and the pangs of death; indefatigable toilers who reap with joy what they have sown with tears, and who pursue, with sweat of brow and agony of soul, the work of salvation, begun with the sweat and agony of a God.

Yes; north, and south, and everywhere, yesterday, to-morrow, and for ever, I see man in the unvarying attitude of labour and pain. The man who bends over the anvil, weariness in his limbs, and the man who bends over a book, paleness on his cheek—the man who sows with grain harvests of corn, and the man who sows with the Word of God generations of saints: when I ask them what is the law of their lives, they raise their heads, and wiping their foreheads they sigh together—"Children of Adam, like our father we eat our bread in the sweat of our brows; children of Eve, like our mother we bring forth in pain; and see how everything that we produce bears the indelible trace of this law which God engraves on our works as the sign of their perfection, and which He engraves on the furrows of our brow as the seal of human dignity and human greatness".

Thus the voice of history, the voice of nature, and the voice of God render the same testimony. They tell us that man is born to labour, that labour is the law of life. Furthermore, labour is the law of education. Give to a plant its proper soil, atmosphere, and sunshine, the plant grows and develops to its full perfection. It is otherwise with the education

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of this being whom de Maistre called the human plant. Man is free: his development must be free. Man is a fallen being; his development must be laborious, he raises himself up only by an effort. Man is the masterpiece of God, but in the finishing of this masterpiece man himself must concur. "Men are but children of a larger growth;" and in order to grow up into good men, children too must work. Child! child! if thou work not, thou wilt make thy father blush, and thy mother weep. But work, above all, because this is the will of thy Father who is in heaven.

To do anything of worth, there is need of constancy.[1] The child who does not work is an inconstant being. Such a one will never achieve anything great. Those clever fellows who could be great men if they only studied, but who do not, generally *cannot*. The mere capability of applying one's self continuously is in itself a great talent; and this talent, which is more valuable than many brilliant qualities, may to a certain extent be acquired during the training of your school-days. Every hour that you spend at real work increases your taste for work, your capacity for working strenuously. As difficulty belongs to the very essence of work, every time you work you overcome an obstacle and achieve a victory. The generous habit of conquering yourself strengthens your soul,

[1] That is a pregnant saying of Father Edmund Campian, as intelligible in Latin as in English: "*In studio labor, in labore methodus, in methodo constantia*".

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and you learn to put aside promptly, and as if by instinct, every natural temptation to sloth or distraction by saying with an energy which nothing can bar —*Volo!* "I will do my work because it is my duty to work".

But the heart! Every system of education which does not form and discipline the heart is radically vicious. Education which comprehends man and his destiny watches over the child's heart as the priest watches before the Tabernacle. Nay, it enters within the heart, and there, under the eye of God, renders fruitful all that His hand has sown, all that is greatest and purest, and strongest and holiest in the depths of the heart of man. But ah! what does the heart become when sloth, which withers and dishonours all that it touches, has wrought upon it irreparable mischief? Sloth destroys in the heart all the generous instincts of devotedness and self-sacrifice. Sloth and selfishness are closely allied. The slothful soul knows not the passion of heroism, the enthusiasm of great things—nothing but the craving after satisfaction, amusement, enjoyment—self, self being the end and centre of all things. And so the heart, with all its rich exuberance of vitality sunk in a miserable selfishness, eats itself away in a barrenness that belies all the hopes of earth and the designs of heaven.

But would that it were only barren. No, sloth pushes its ravages farther. The heart in its need of expansion must take its course. Not having strength

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to mount, it will descend, it will fling itself away on the current of its passions. This life-wave which stirs and swells the youthful breast must have a vent. Lawful or unlawful, a vent it must have; for the heart is a living spring, it must needs pour itself out. Not being restrained within its legitimate channel by manly effort, its love will ravage what it was meant to fertilize and adorn. It will bring death where it ought to have brought life; and in shameful excesses and deplorable misfortunes it will exhibit the havoc which the tyranny of the passions can work in the heart of man. Yes, dear children, if you do not acquire in your school-days stern habits of work and discipline, will you be able to keep watch over your heart? Will you be able to conquer your passions? And, if your passions be not conquered, if your heart be not guarded, what will become of you?

But *you*, young conquerors, whose courage and perseverance have gained for you the victory, come now and receive with joy the first fruits of your painful labours, gathering the harvest of laurels which have been watered by your sweat. And after having laid your crowns down before the altar at the feet of Jesus, go to your homes, and gladden with your well-won prizes the eyes of those who love you. Let your school-triumph be a family feast; and after the hard work of the year, taste the filial happiness of taking your repose under the shelter of your father's blessing, and your mother's smile. But let this well-

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deserved repose be only a preparation for greater labours still; and forget not that in heaven, as on earth, labour alone is crowned.

. . . . . .

These were the last words that Father Felix spoke on 18 August, 1856, to those 400 French lads, whose hearts, even before he began to speak, were throbbing with anxiety as to the rank that was about to be assigned to them in their various classes under the wistful eyes of mothers and friends. But the lesson which the preacher of Notre Dame here inculcates so earnestly is still more appropriate at this time, now that the holidays are over and work begins again. I hope the good resolves with which Father Felix must have inspired his young hearers did not evaporate much during the vacation which they had to pass through before reaching the time when they could begin to put those resolutions in practice. But if, reading these lines now, some boys or girls, who have idled away their time, would make up their minds to work, they will not have long to wait before carrying out these good resolutions. They can begin to-morrow or to-day. And let them remember that the beginnings of such a change are far the hardest. See the tremendous efforts the poor horse must make to get his heavily-laden cart fairly under weigh, especially if it have sunk in some muddy rut. But after the initial strain he plods on pretty easily. Begin then, force yourself to work in earnest, and you will soon come to like your work. Little

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cowardly children, if the air be somewhat chill, are slow about getting into the tide, dip their feet timidly at the water's edge, and grow more and more uncomfortable. Plunge in boldly, and the chill is all over at once. Learn to swim and it will be a luxury. So for those who paddle lazily at the margin of the ocean of knowledge.

Let me, in conclusion, emphasize one point which Father Felix impressed on his young Bretons, and which perhaps is more important for young Celts than for either Bretons or Britons. At least, the Celtic race is supposed to be more distinguished for the brilliancy of its gifts than for plodding, systematic, persevering industry in the use of them. There are few points of the sort more important for all of us, especially the young who have all their life before them—how much it will come to, God knows—there are few points which it behoves us more to take to heart and make our own of than this, that nearly all the difference between career and career, between life and life, between man and man, lies in the greater or less degree of pains kept up for the shorter or longer period of time.

Let us take pains! There is a great deal of significance in that phrase on which I must not pause now; for any more sermonizing by me, Pater Infelix, would only weaken the impression which I hope Père Felix has produced. Pray, then, young people, for yourselves and for each other, and let us old people pray for you too, that you may all spend

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well the year of school-work that you are beginning, that so you may in good time be ready for the work of life, and then, when your life-work is done, you may say your prayers, and fall asleep, and have happy dreams.

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ON DOING OUR WORK WELL.

THIS is a business age. "The age of chivalry is gone." Money-making, push, energy, business-tact —these are the things that are valued, and the highest enterprises must be managed on what are called business principles. Now the wonder is how many of our Lord's words, spoken in what was *not* a business age, chime in with this spirit of the time, this *zeit-geist*. To us all He addresses that admonition of the parable, *Negotiamini dum venio*[1]— "Trade until I come, do business until I come".

Heresy was hardly ever more unreasonable, and its influence was hardly ever more blighting, than when it dared to contradict the Catholic doctrine of merit, when it dared to mutter its shibboleth of faith without works, which for very shame's sake it must explain away and practically abandon. There are mysteries in God's dealings with His poor creature, man; but, whatever else is dark, it is clear that God deigns to accept and more than accept our co-operation in the life-long work of applying individually to our own souls the infinite merits of the redemption.

[1] Luke xix. 13.

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Dei enim sumus adjutores;[1] we are God's helpers, co-operators, co-workers, *συνέργοι*.

How are we doing our little part in this partnership? Are we toiling, trading, doing business? Are we doing a thriving trade? Are we managing our business well? I really think that it is impossible for us not to be greatly struck by the contrast that Shakespeare makes the dying Cardinal dwell upon at the last: "If I had served my God with half the zeal with which I served my King, he would not have left me in mine old age naked to mine enemies". It is our own part I am thinking of now, not God's part; and the contrast that strikes me is the very different way in which those whom we call worldlings and those who are supposed to be devoted to God's special service go through their work respectively. A good many in the world do their work badly enough, and they generally suffer for it; and, on the other hand, there is plenty of self-denial and perseverance and unromantic heroism among those who are devoting their lives to the service of God. But, when every excuse is made and when everything has been taken into consideration, I fear that we, at least, shall often be forced to take to ourselves our Redeemer's mild rebuke: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light". The statesmen, politicians, barristers, journalists, literary men, physicians, engineers, merchants, grocers, haberdashers, and all the rest from the

[1] 1 Cor. III. 9.

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highest to the lowest—what steady application, what perseverance, what quiet energy, what self-denial and self-sacrifice, are exemplified in the various careers that these words remind us of! Is there a sufficiently close counterpart in a sufficient number of those whose vocation is something like our own?

General questions of this sort will not come to much; but each of us can easily bring the matter home to himself, if he likes. Hardly any of the incentives to earnestness in human enterprise, hardly any of the motives to human ambition, but may have their equivalent in the heart of the man who wishes to work for God alone; and, on the other hand, the homeliest sayings of worldly wisdom have their meaning when applied to the spiritual life. What, for instance, if we applied to our spiritual duties, and to all the other duties of the day, this excellent Chinese proverb: "One day is as good as three, if you do the right thing at the right time"? What a contrast there must be between the use made of the same opportunities by two individuals of the same vocation, one of whom puts this Chinese proverb into practice, and the other does not!

But, perhaps, in no point ought the example of those who are supposed to be serving the world, and struggling to advance themselves, and to get money and a name—in no part of their example ought a sterner lesson to be contained for us, who are supposed to be serving God directly and exclusively, than in what we have often read about the long and toilsome

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noviceship gone through by those who were determined to excel in the various arts and professions, determined to realize Alexander's favourite line of Homer:—

Αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων (VI. 208).

We can probably recall appalling stories that we have read about the "practice that made perfect" certain actors, artists, singers, consummate performers on the violin, or wonderful experts in higher and more intellectual pursuits.

There was a controversy in the newspapers, I remember, more than thirty years ago, as to the person who had first given the famous definition of genius —"a transcendent capacity for taking pains". It seems that several said something like that, while thinking they were saying what had never been said before. A speech of Lord Derby's started this question at that time; but, several years earlier, Sir William Hamilton had written this paragraph:—

"To one who complimented Sir Isaac Newton on his genius he replied that, if he had made any discoveries, it was owing more to patient attention than to any other talent. There is but little analogy between mathematics and play-acting; but I heard the great Mrs. Siddons, in nearly the same language, attribute the whole superiority of her unrivalled talent to the more intense study which she bestowed on her parts. 'Genius,' says Helvetius, 'is nothing but a continued attention.' 'Genius,' says Buffon, 'is only protracted patience.' 'In the exact sciences,

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at least,' says Cuvier, 'it is the invincible patience of a sound intellect which truly constitutes genius.' And Chesterfield has also observed that 'the power of applying attention, steady and undissipated, to a single object, is the sure mark of a superior genius'."

My excuse for accumulating, or letting Sir William Hamilton accumulate for me, these different ways of saying the same thing is that almost the same definition can be given of sanctity. Not only genius, but sanctity, is a transcendent capacity for taking pains. Think of the pains that St. John Berchmans took, and many another more famous saint. We, too, must take pains. I hardly know a better ejaculation than the one that Judge O'Hagan made for himself, and repeated constantly: "Lord, raise our hearts to Thee, and fix them upon Thee; teach us to take pains for the kingdom of heaven".

We must take pains. A significant phrase, even more so than the corresponding phrase in French, which puts it in the singular:—

> **Travaillez, prenez de la peine:**
> **C'est le fond qui manque le moins.**

Take pains. Every real effort costs us at some time or other pain and much pain and many pains; and we must take them. It is not like catching cold, which in reality catches us. No helps, no precautions, no special methods, can dispense with pain of some sort in the acquisition of anything really good. "No royal road to Euclid," as a very small grocer said to a very small boy more than sixty years ago.

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And there is no royal road to perfection or sanctity —no road that dispenses with toil, trouble, and pains. Heaven is for heroes—or, at least, for brave souls, for hard workers; not for sluggards or cowards. At any rate, if poltroons should manage to sneak in somehow, they cannot expect good places in heaven —reserved seats, which might, perhaps, be the translation of *locum nominatum in regno cœlorum*, which occurs somewhere in Scripture. Father Neumayr speaks with great contempt of people of this sort—so mean-spirited that in their aspirations after heaven they are content with the corner behind the door—*angulo post januam contenti*—and this not through humility or self-distrust, but through cowardice and sloth and self-indulgence and want of faith, hope, and charity. And then the terrible risk that they may just fall short of even their low ambition!

Amongst the many mysteries of heaven does it not seem to be one of the strangest mysteries that heaven will still be heaven even for those who have failed to win their proper place there; who have frustrated some of the designs of God's mercy, and have in many ways disappointed the Heart of Jesus; who have abused many graces and lost many opportunities, and who, during many precious days and months and years of their earthly probation, have paid scanty heed to that warning of our Judge, *Negotiamini dum venio*—"Trade until I come"?

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